CREATIVE POWER

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CREATIVE POWER

BY
HUGHES MEARNS

CREATIVE POWER
LIONS IN THE WAY
CREATIVE YOUTH
I RIDE IN MY COACH
THE VINEGAR SAINT
RICHARD RICHARD

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THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

CREATIVE POWER

BY

HUGHES MEARNS

GARDEN CITY, NEW YORK
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1930

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES AT
THE COUNTRY LIFE PRESS
GARDEN CITY, N. Y.

TO

JOHN DEWEY

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YOUTH

I must laugh and dance and sing,
Youth is such a lovely thing.

Soon I shall be old and stately;
I shall promenade sedately

Down a narrow pavement street,
And the people that I meet

Will be stiff and narrow too,
Careful what they say and do;

It will be quite plain to see
They were never young like me.

When I walk where flowers grow
I shall have to stoop down low

If I want one for a prize;
Now I'm just the proper size.

Let me laugh and dance and sing,
Youth is such a lovely thing.

By A. W. when she
was in the eleventh grade.

PART ONE

Chapter I

THE BEGINNING OF AN ADVENTURE

It was in my early Army days, when I was about getting used to the eternal smell of saddle soap, that I came abruptly before my first colonel, a full colonel with eagles. By this time one had mastered the technique of meeting an officer, which was, mainly, to center all attention upon the shoulder insignia and then to give a salute, with rising degrees of awe and subjection, from a mock and grinning wave to second-louies up to a solemn, head-up-belly-in adoration to majors. I had been told about lieutenant-colonels, but I had not fallen upon one; and here I was before the eagles themselves.

"Halt!" said I to myself; followed a cracking of heels and a salute that nearly snapped off my garrison hat. He did not even look up from his papers; so I stood there at rigid attention.

When finally he glanced over in mild surprise and gave me a nonchalant salute in release I recognized him—he was just a boy I had once taught in the eighth grade! So I grinned and snapped into it again, with a heel-click of unmistakable amusement; for I saw by his bewilderment that he was slowly comprehending the comic situation: this groveling creature before him had been his one-time master.

"Oh," he said, coming forward awkwardly, "uh—hello. What—uh—are you doing here?"

I saluted smartly again. "Sir——" I began.

"Don't do that!" he exclaimed hastily. "It—it embarrasses me."

"Why should it, Richard?" I asked as we shook hands. "Long ago I had to get used to my pupils' passing me."

"Well—" he fumbled for words—"I can't forget that you were once my teacher; and I suppose I'm still a little bit afraid of you."

"I never did anything to make you afraid of me, did I?" I asked.

"No," he meditated as he lighted a cigaret, "I don't remember that you ever did. You were awfully easy on us, in fact. Still—— Well—" he brightened up and tried to joke it off—"maybe it's because I used to respect you." Then he scanned my sleeve, bare of chevrons, and became even more embarrassed; for he was a full colonel and I was as far removed from colonel as one could get, going the other way. "I was only a little boy then," he covered hastily, "and you were a big man."

"I was only a little boy myself," I told him, "just turned nineteen, and more scared of that roomful of kids than you would believe."

"We had good times there," he mused. "We used to laugh a lot. I don't know if we ever learned anything, but I do remember how we laughed. All other classrooms I have been in were mighty solemn affairs in comparison."

"Yes," I admitted, "we did laugh. Perhaps that was the best thing we did there. If I couldn't have laughed with you I would not have stayed in the business. But the laugh worked, and I have never given it up. In fact, it was the success of the laugh that kept me in teaching; I learned something about education because of that laugh, something that seemed at times to bring me almost to the verge of a great discovery. I have been on the trail of it for years, and like all fanatics, I am always hoping that the solution of the problem is just around the corner; which stimulates my enthusiasm mightily and bucks me up when I fail. When——"

"What's the great discovery all about?" he inquired, interrupting, as colonels will do.

"The mystery of all living," said I. "When——"

"A large order," he remarked.

"Yes," I agreed. "When this war is over——"

But that discussion was continued later, in the privacy of a hotel room, where a colonel might conceal the treasonable act of dining on terms of social equality with the buck private of a training camp.

II

Then one day, when the war was over at last, two telegrams came offering jobs, one a superintendency in a great state system, and the other a grade position in an experimental school. In our family we never gave more than a passing thought to the superintendency; all our eager discussion was upon the teaching job. What did they mean by experimental school? Could one really work with children without interference from the traditional machinery of supervision, recitation, textbook, examinations, and curriculum, as the telegram seemed to imply? Would they really stand for complete freedom?

The next week I was in New York meeting at luncheon with a group of men, among whom, I was told, were members of the famous General Education Board which was providing the financial backing for the experimental venture. I talked enthusiastically about what I believed could be done with children if one were given half a chance with an experiment in free teaching. They listened most intently, but they laughed at my excitement, a laugh in which I joined, for my eagerness and faith were really comic; and I knew from their joking that they had not misjudged my warmth as mere salesmanship in job hunting. "Oh, I believe in miracles," said one. From the heartiness of the laugh that followed I have always suspected that he was a clergyman. Another asked if I could bring a rabbit out of a *very* high hat. And another said, "Tell us the story of your life, but—this is a hard crowd—the only thing we'll admit believing is that you were born."

I did not mistake their fervor either. Their high good humor did not at all conceal their earnestness; they were as eager as I to try out a new way with childhood. And their jokes and their laughter were music to me; long ago I had crossed off the solemn ones as lacking in either faith or judgment. One remark, however, I must not omit. In the cloakroom one of them said, "Don't worry about results. An experimental school is, by definition, a place where courageous parents send their children."

Later in the day, alone with the director of the school, I grew suddenly depressed. I had talked too much, I told myself. After all, I was undertaking an adventure; who could guarantee outcomes? "You don't expect me to show results right off?" I asked. "I may be here months before there is a sign of all this creative power I've been talking so glibly about." He answered me seriously, but with a jesting light in his eye, "We don't expect anything from you for years." At no time did he worry me by premature expectations; for the five years of the experimentation I was given the unmolested freedom of a scientist in a laboratory.

All my conditions were accepted, one of which was that I should begin with the eighth grade. Everyone knew, I argued, that creative activity had almost untrammeled expression in the first three grades of the school; there was much of it still in the fourth and fifth grades, although rapidly diminishing before the demands of school tasks; in the sixth and seventh grades it was found only in wayward spots; but surely it had gone in the eighth grade. Well, had it? My belief was that it had only withdrawn from public view. The world of school did not value its products, had repudiated them, indeed, as worthless and often immoral; hence it became, at about the eighth grade, one of those vices loved in secret but eventually given up and lost to possession forever.

III

Through it all I was buoyed up by a well-founded optimism. Twenty years or more of experience with children and older youth had given me grounds for confidence. In classroom and in groups outside the classroom my interest had never been primarily in subjects of study or in anything taught or studied, but rather in the swirl of wild and often incoherent imaginings that roared continuously in the conscious undercurrent of the mind. Impersonations of grandeur; stories, lived throughout months and never really ended; fictitious debates with authority; daydreams of power, love, and hate; inventions that defied all the laws of everything; practical plans for the next contest in the school yard; phrases of incomparable beauty and often of no meaning at all; this was the sort of mind stuff that I had specialized in. Believing oneself a runaway train rushing toward a river-bridge that is only slowly closing, or walking deliberately down the dark stairway while a clanking skeleton is lumbering and slithering just back of you with long white arms reaching—these are common scarifying thoughts of timid young boys. "If you had an eye in the back of your head——" one lad confided to me. This never-ending current beneath the surface of public behavior was to me something of enormous educational value; and practice and failure in many situations had given me a clue to its use.

To step into this region with a strong presumption of its importance was a game I had often played with young folks; for no reason at first, I must admit, save my own amusement, but that, of course, I never revealed. The overpowering curriculum took up most of the time, but there were always moments that could be stolen from the lessons, with one eye on the door to see that no supervising officer was about; and the after-school group that gathered around and seemed never to want to go home was fruitful in illustration of that world which lies just below the surface of everyday living.

Early I began to note that it was often a rational world where youth brought their elders before the bar of pure reason; and here the absent adults were without their old support from tradition, prejudice, or arbitrary authority. Many a fine lad is worried over the puzzling question of God's justice; and the evasions of older people, to whom he should have a right to go for answers, are even more of a puzzle to him. He is reluctant to convict them of hypocrisy or of ignorance, but, as is so often the case when his mind functions better than theirs, he is accused of evil-mindedness and is thereby thrown into himself where help is not to be found. Hungry in the search for truth, this type is often eager to unburden, but not until he has cautiously made sure that his fine ideal will not be scorned.

Others had accumulated a store of information from the pursuit of collections, stamps, birds' eggs, butterflies, and the like, or from the strangest readings in encyclopedias and compendiums of fact like the *World Almanac;* so their talk, once it was loosened through proved friendliness, approached that of the intensity of a research student in his special field. Sometimes, I noted, these were the chaps who stood low in "school facts," but often they knew more about equally important things of the world than their instructors.

Inventors cropped up with plans or rough models of their contrivances; one had worked out a simplified Morse code with fewer dots and dashes, and therefore cheaper and speedier; another had plans of football strategy that would surely take out opposing players and guarantee an average gain of four yards to a down, which, of course, would be enough to win any game. One lad appeared with the gift of naming any note struck on a piano played in the next room; a girl could make astonishing statuettes out of stray bits of chalk; a pair of imps showed me how to carry on a classroom conversation by wigwagging with the thumb, unsurpassed, they claimed, for all purposes including examinations.

Of course, the deeper rhythm of their minds was not to be disclosed except in private, very private, interviews. In spite of all their familiar chatter they ever commanded a remarkable reticence. When I lowered my standard to count their confidences as right and respectable I learned much, but the more serious stirring of heart and mind I rarely touched; and I respected this side of their lives too much to probe. All I have learned was given freely.

Creative activity comes from this pulsing stream of inconsequential thought and feeling. One must know something about it, therefore, and one must take its crude manifestations seriously if one is to help it to that finer expression which is creative art.

Unaided it does not advance far into the realm of production. The various media are there, language, crayon, color, and the like; and there is always some attempt, however crude, to employ them; but failure to achieve complete satisfaction in the result, or the outright suppression by elders, or the intimidating intrusion of adult standards, something chills the ardor of self-expression along these lines except among those, the predestinate artists and thinkers, whose urge to express is superior to all rebuff.

IV

I must interpolate here an element, of the importance of which I was not entirely conscious at first: I came to youth with little interest in teaching as such, but with a great concern for creative expression in writing. I am a writing man and not a teacher of the subject of writing; and there is a vast difference between these two sorts of creature.

A word or two on that theme, for it is most important. I have interests in a number of things, teaching among them, but these are not my real interest. I would not give up a meal willingly for any of them. But for my real interest, the fashioning into words of that turbulent undercurrent of my life, of whose meaning and significance I am not fully aware until I have so fashioned it, that is something for which I have gone willingly without food and sleep for days and nights on end. It is so terrible an attraction that one must avoid it when there is other work to do ("Apage, Sathanas!" one cries, as if it were, indeed, the very devil, as I am sometimes persuaded it is); for once it seizes the victim, then he is done for until physical exhaustion denies further effort. Through that travail he comes to possess an understanding of all publicans and sinners and winebibbers generally who have lost the will to withstand temptation.

The temptation would not be so bad if the mere writing were all. Long after the script has been done the thing winds and unwinds through all the waking acts and thoughts; constant mental revision goes on; rereadings must be made; addenda, elisions, expandings, interpolations, all these trouble and torture. Interest dies and revulsion takes its place, but the driving force of patching and remodeling goes on. Oh, those who fashion creative stuff out of the welter of consciousness, they know what an interest is, and, according as they know, they both love and fear it.

The teacher of writing, however, is a much cooler person. One could easily doubt that his interest ever reaches so boiling a point. The shape of the written thing takes his fancy, not the moving power of it; he goes in for classification and definition; he hunts synecdoche and brings down alexandrines and preterites. He believes that a sonnet must have fourteen lines, and if you show him that even the masters have written sonnets that are just two lines too long (see Shakespeare's XXIX), he simply does not understand at all, for he blinks at you and repeats his definition.

> "I shall sit here," the Footman remarked, "till tomorrow——"
>
> At this moment the door of the house opened, and a large plate came skimming out, straight at the Footman's head: it just grazed his nose, and broke to pieces against one of the trees behind him.
>
> "—or next day, maybe," the Footman continued in the same tone, exactly as if nothing had happened.

Further, he is sure about the matter of taste, believing that all the good artists in letters are listed in the textbooks; and, worse, that all of these—all, mind you!—should be appreciated by everybody equally. He has no loves and hates in literature, no more than a museum guard might have for duodecahedron crystals. He would not give up a meal for anything.

I cannot leave him so easily, so must give him another paragraph, for he stands in the way of more abundant life and must be so stamped, and for the further reason that he must be distinguished from that great band of humane teachers of literature in all the grades through the university who have never confused the letter with the spirit, who believe in life and know that literature *is* life, who have never withdrawn from the world and, therefore, have never refused the cup to the thirsty. But these others, cool and passive and so serene, with their high standards and impeccable good taste! Always they play safe on the side of the heavier authorities. They wait until time has settled the hash of this one and that one; so they must always remain years behind the live appreciations of their own day. One may suspect their complacent Pharisaism but when one has graduated from believing pupil to teaching colleague and has seen them in a corner of the faculty room conning over their marked-up textbook in the thousand and first preparation for the next class—where their exact learning will shine like true wisdom!—one is then quite sure of it. Oh, quite!

I am unfair to him, of course. I cannot be otherwise; for his ways are not my ways, and he has no pity in him. He and his kind have too often denied the crumb to Lazarus. And children are not of his kind either. Children are creative persons, not scholiasts; they use language as the artist the world over and in all ages has used his medium, not as an end in itself but as a means for the expression of thought and feeling. Language in itself, they sense, is comparatively unimportant; if the vision is steady and the feeling true these will find their proper vehicle. The attention is never on the word but upon the force that creates the word.

Chapter II

THE POETRY DRAWER

An hour or two in the school before meeting my first class was enough to place it roughly in its progress toward being a free-activity school. It was still in the noisy, semi-hysterical stage: between periods children were rushing forward at an angle, as if the feet could never catch up with the head; the eyes were intent on a purely egoistic endeavor, so collisions with other egoistic bodies were the rule. Ego called out to ego, commanding, directing, censoring, and receiving no attention at all from other egos. To be heard above the din, teachers in the halls had almost to practice lip-reading, and they were a smiling but brave lot; one third of the staff, I was told, were new on this the third year of the experiment. Obviously the school had unleashed a mighty and valuable force, but it had not been able in so short a time to teach the beauty of order via self-control.

Fortunately I had seen this development before in the first few years of the Shady Hill School in Philadelphia, where once I was nearly knocked downstairs by a rush of boys who warned, "Look out, please!" as they hurled themselves through the air to the landing where I was, and cried, "Excuse me, please!" as each one took me amidship—a polite lot, you see. It was Mary Frazier who gave us courage in the Shady Hill days; she had just returned from a long visit to Bedales, Abbotsholme, and a dozen other places in Europe where the new idea of child-freedom had been put into practice. "They must learn to use freedom," she would say. "This is just the necessary transition stage; they all tell about it; but something new and fine in child-life will be the outcome if we have patience and do not give up and revert to the old suppressions."

During those first few hours in the new experimental school I could look on with more complacence than others of the staff. Some of them were outspoken in their condemnation of the social incivilities all about us, claiming that nothing would come of this selfish savagery until a good firm heel was put down upon it. I watched a child rush to the elevator, which had already closed its door and had gone halfway up to the next floor; she called it to come down; she banged upon the door steadily, then turned with flushed, indignant face to a group of silent, observing teachers. "He wouldn't come back for me!" she cried, and darted up the stairs. A teacher said something we could not hear; so we leaned our heads over while she repeated, "Each child should have a private elevator, of course."

Eventually, all that was taken care of through the machinery of student council, group discussion, town meeting, and the like, until the individual sacrifice that goes with social order was understood and intelligently accepted; and the iron heel was brought down where necessary upon such anarchists or dangerous individualists as temporarily imperiled the commonweal; but even the transition stage was to me inspiriting and full of hope for the future.

There were noise and confusion but no disorder in the usual school sense; each child was intent upon a proper school job: they rushed to the library to get down the books that might help them; they rushed into the rooms to which they were assigned from period to period; they rushed to the gymnasium, the lunch-room, the assembly hall, a complete surrender to the interests which that school had set up. The sneaking about, the loitering, the open or covert resistance to school authority, characteristically present under the old discipline—these were simply not in evidence at all. The faces were often hot and flushed, although the eyes were steady and serious; the physical reactions were nervous and high-strung, obvious signs of overstimulation; but the readiness and the will were all pointed in the right direction.

II

Naturally, then, I was prepared for that stampede of the eighth grade into my room. They came with the impact of a subway crowd at Times Square in the peak of the rush hour; I am sure that for a moment they wedged in the doorway, presenting eager faces, cool-eyed and serious.

The first group cast one appraising glance at me and decided that the front of the room would be the best place to get the most out of that period; the next group, after one swift estimate, decided that the back of the room would give them the supreme advantage; the remainder disputed noisily for the chairs in the middle of the room. In place of the usual desks the room was equipped with movable tables, and they were well named; they moved, caromed against one another, shoved this way and that by grasping hands and darting bodies.

In a matter of seconds the children settled their conflicting differences and turned upon me with startling silence. To this day I retain the picture of those coldly unprejudiced eyes; just, they were, but self-centered and merciless. "Well, who are you," they seemed to be saying to me, "and what, pray, do you think you are going to do with us?" There was no respect for authority, certainly no awe of it, nor was there the slightest warmth of hospitality. Even the silence was their own notion of what to do next. They waited for me to expose my wares—and myself.

One must not think for a moment that I was confident of the right procedure. Frankly I was frightened, as one might reasonably be in facing a strange animal. Twenty years of teaching seemed just the worst sort of preparation. For, consider, I had come among them to touch some of the secret sources of their lives, to discover and to bring out the power that they possessed but, through timidity or ignorance, could not use; to develop personality, in short. Naturally I could not disclose my mission, and naturally I must win their approval for whatever I should do: so, under the disguise of a teacher of a special subject, I must bide my time, wait for propitious moments, utilize whatever luckily came to me, and with nothing to guide me but an abundant faith and the spirit of adventure.

And they never did find out my mission from me. Always I was just a teacher, and, as the school environment was planned to keep the teacher out of any serious position of authority, my treatment was often the amiable condescension of good fellows and self-sufficient lassies who tolerated me as not too much of an interruption. A boy confided that his father—a high official in one of the great railways of the country—had said that all teachers were unsuccessful persons, a poor lot usually, who had failed in life or just hadn't the brains to go out and make something of themselves. He told me, in all innocence, that he agreed with his father! A delicious moment, that! Not unless they read this book will they be aware of the deliberate experiment in creative education that was the motive of my five years' work with them.

III

That steady silence was most embarrassing. I fumbled in my pocket and came upon some manuscript poems which Roy Helton had just given to me. I talked about him as a friend and not as a literary person. They were amused at incidents in the personal side of our relationship, the fact, for instance, that it had always been my bad luck to chum up with tall men, which didn't show me off at all, and made everybody think of—— I hesitated purposely. "Mutt and Jeff," someone suggested quietly. "Exactly," said I, and the group and I were immediately in comfortable rapport. Some of the cold inquiry left their faces; they slouched forward in a warmer mood.

I read them *Old Christmas,* then only in manuscript, a bit of the lore of present-day Kentucky gathered by Helton among the mountain folk. It told of that night twelve days after the "real Christmas," when speerits walk and one must stay up and keep the door ajar; for the speerits are a-weary and may want to come in and rest. The author permits me to print it here.

One must know that Sally Anne Barton has been sitting up all night in her cabin, keeping the ghostly vigil of Old Christmas, and that in the hour just before dawn she sees Lomey Carter coming toward her across the snow. Sally Anne goes to the door to welcome her old friend, but she does not know that Lomey Carter is dead and that this is a speerit come a-calling on Old Christmas night, when the elder blooms and "critters kneel down in their straw."

OLD CHRISTMAS

"Where you coming from, Lomey Carter,
  So airly over the snow?
And what's them pretties you got in your hand,
  And where you aiming to go?
Step in, Honey: Old Christmas morning
  I ain't got nothing much:
Maybe a bite of sweetness and corn bread,
  A little ham meat and such.
But come in, Honey! Sally Anne Barton's
  Hungering after your face.
Wait till I light my candle up:
  Set down! There's your old place.
Now where you been so airly this morning?"

  "*Graveyard, Sally Anne.*
Up by the trace in the salt lick meadows
  Where Taulbe kilt my man."

"Taulbe ain't to home this morning. . . .
  I can't scratch up a light:
Dampness gits on the heads of the matches;
  I'll blow up the embers bright."

"*Needn't trouble. I won't be stopping:*
Going a long ways still."

"You didn't see nothing, Lomey Carter,
Up on the graveyard hill?"

"*What should I see there, Sally Anne Barton?* "

"Spirits do walk, last night."

"*There were an elder bush a-blooming*
While the moon still give some light."

"Yes, elder bushes, they bloom, Old Christmas,
And critters kneel down in their straw. . . .
Anything else—up in the graveyard?"

"*One thing more I saw:*
I saw my man, with his head still bleeding
Where Taulbe's shot went through."

"What did he say?"

"*He stooped and kissed me.*"

"What did he say to you?"

"*Said, Lord Jesus forguv your Taulbe;*
But he told me another word:
He said it soft when he stooped and kissed me.
That were the last I heard."

"Taulbe ain't to home this morning."

"*I know that, Sally Anne,*
For I kilt him, coming down through the meadows
Where Taulbe kilt my man.
I met him up on the meadow trace
When the moon was fainting fast;
I had my dead man's rifle gun
And kilt him as he come past."

"I heard two shots."

"'*'Twas his was second:*
He shot me 'fore he died:
You'll find us at daybreak, Sally Anne Barton:
I'm laying there dead at his side."

With one movement those movable tables swung closer around me. No sound was made either of approval or disapproval, but the unanimous gesture was unmistakable. Some of the hot excitement had faded from their faces. The spell of the poet, as I read on from other Helton manuscripts, worked upon them; it gave rest to their minds, stilled the fierce incitation to competition which the school in that stage of its growth had unwittingly brought out in them. A lovely, awkward friendliness appeared among them, touching the faces before me with that grotesque grimace and look of wonder which only hobbledehoy youth shows when completely off guard.

Then suddenly I came to the end of my manuscripts. They waited; I had nothing more to give them; and somehow speech and idea had left me a blank. Thirty minutes to go and no more material; any teacher knows the terror of that situation! In the embarrassed silence, which the children did not seem to mind, a deep boy's voice spoke slowly, "What are *you* gonna teach?" I shrugged and looked at the class. "And just when we were having a good time!" I said in mock pathos. That set them up with a shout. It was most sporting of me, their bright eyes showed, but that is not what interested them. They valued my verbal return for its swiftness, for the surprise in it, and for its utter lack of truth. That is part of my own equipment, of the utmost importance to me in molding the tricky stuff of personality

Almost immediately a girl asked abruptly, as if disaster threatened, "Are we going to have grammar?" The tone was menacing, and I knew right off that we were not going to have grammar. Some years later this little lady was to write

Before Cliché and receive not only the tribute of many reprintings, but, as well, the appreciation of hundreds who were grateful for her keenly humorous invention. "Are we going to have grammar?" There was humor in the question, and irony, satire, criticism.

She took the whole class with her by sheer dramatic power, which I noted with excitement, for it was the very thing I was after. Three years later Margaret Holz was to discover this gift and present her in two scenes from the Joan plays, Schiller's and Shaw's, each in its own tongue. At that time the youthful actress gave a power of dramatization which, I safely claim, was superior to the then current best; she made the audience wholly unaware of the barrier of language. After that performance I leaned to her mother to say, "Astounding, isn't it!" She nodded but was unable to do more than whisper, "I do not—I do not recognize my own daughter."

While I rejoiced—to return to my eighth grade—in the young lady's gift, which, by the way, I hereby predict a larger world may some day have the chance to appreciate, I had to admit that for the moment her dramatic genius had shattered the little friendly hold I had made with this class. Luck stood by me, however, as it did throughout this whole period, but the disaster drove me back upon my one sure resource when in trouble with children—I tell the truth.

Of course, I know the proper traditional procedure when, meeting one's first class, an impertinent question like that intrudes. Incipient revolt must be crushed; the rebels must feel the swift stroke of the master: one levels that group with a commanding eye and, arms folded, says, "*If in my judgment this class needs grammar, this class will have grammar!*" And that usually is that! But I had been three years away from the classroom; the very day before I had been in Army uniform; so perhaps I had forgotten the old technique.

In silence I rested my eyes on the view outside the window and visibly meditated the question. "Grammar?" I spoke my thoughts. "I don't know . . . I never use it myself."

(A quick laugh from the group, but I went on unmoved.) "I have studied it, of course; and I have taught it, and enjoy teaching it. But I don't know what good it ever did me. . . . Really I don't. . . . I speak and write the language I have heard, in my family and among my friends. It is important, of course, to have the right kind of family and the right kind of friends. . . . My speech is probably full of blunders; I don't know; it doesn't seem to bother anybody. They laughed at me up in New England, where I went to school, because I said *thawt* for t-h-o-u-g-h-t, instead of *thot*, but they didn't like me or respect me any the less for that. I know that my written language is far from what it should be, for I can't write a page that does not need revision; and even after I have done my best work upon something that I want to publish, the copyreader in the editorial rooms fills my manuscript with corrections. And this same story is told by everybody who writes for print, not excluding teachers. Grammar? I suppose it is like good manners, or friendliness, or unselfishness, or sportsmanship; it's something one lives and therefore cannot get satisfactorily out of a book."

Over that we had a spirited debate—the truth always has that power of stirring up things—leading to some equally frank truths about teachers and teaching. The grammatical methods of foreign-language teachers came in for some bitter scoring and for some equally strong defence. I listened. Here I was at once tossed into the undercurrent of their usually unexpressed thinking and feeling. Power of language they undoubtedly had, I mused, terrific power; but no one had apprised them of that gift, I suspected, for it is not the sort that would pass as creditable among teachers generally. It was the clipped, colloquial idiom of youth, hot, prejudiced, rebellious; ungrammatical, and impolite; highly absurd from an adult standard; but beautifully fitting as an instrument to convey genuine feeling.

This, I considered while the battle raged, is the gift which I must bring out for my own purposes through friendly appreciation, through a slow building up of courage in its use. I must convince them of my belief in it; I must rid them of the fears in its use that adults had everlastingly cast about them; then I must teach them how to eliminate the elements —really unimportant!—that give offence to others.

Later in similar scenes, when strong feeling had seized them, I would copy swiftly their vibrant phrases and confront this and that youth with his success, especially that youth who had rooted unbelief in his linguistic powers. "Just listen to this," I would say to him; "you said this so well that I copied it down. Powerful stuff! Boy, you certainly can swing a mean sentence! It fairly makes the hair stand up!" Or, "Did you know that you were really eloquent just now? Let me read what you said. Almost poetry! Grace and beauty and wonderful feeling; really, a perfect thing!"

There is not anyone who cannot be stirred by proof like that. Flattery they hate, these children; and praise they are apt to suspect; but their own ability thus put to them is something that they themselves can appraise as worthy. "And here I've been speaking prose all my life," exclaimed Monsieur Jourdain, "and never knew it!"

IV

Record was kept of these contacts, bits of dialogue, the summary of opinions, remarks made by visitors, suggestions of colleagues, and even the complaints of parents, for this was a research job in a region where data had not been hitherto captured and standardized; therefore it is easy to present here a fairly complete picture from the concluding minutes of that first period with the eighth grade.

Chapter III

THE VOICE OF THE INDIVIDUAL SPIRIT

"EVERYBODY writes poetry nowadays," I was saying. "I write poetry myself, but no one enjoys it but me. I used to think my family liked my poetry, but—one day I found out it was only politeness. After the excitement of making a poem I usually couldn't rest until I'd captured some members of the family. Then I'd read my poem. 'Wonderful!' they'd say. 'Splendid! Has James heard this one?' 'Well, no,' I would reply, quite laid out by the reception. 'I just finished it, you know.' 'Oh, James!'—that would always come next—'*do* come in and hear this poem!' And James would amble in, lean against the door jamb and listen in marvelous imitation of complete, idiotic absorption. After I'd done, James would wobble about with excitement and say, 'Gee! That's swell! A swell poem that!' Always he said the same thing, with the same wobble every time.

"Then one day I stopped reading my poems to them. That was years ago. And, do you know, they've never noticed that I stopped! . . . So that's how I found out. . . ." The children seemed stricken into silent sympathy. "But everybody writes poetry now," I hastened to change the subject, "even boys and girls. So," with an exaggerated gesture to cover the intimacy of my recent confession, "will you please pass up your poetry?"

My intention was to joke them out of their intense and pathetic absorption in my story; they had hung upon it as if they knew all about family indifference, as if, indeed, it might have been their own story; but the uproar that set loose in that class at my abrupt conclusion convinced me that I had hit on something funnier than I had intended.

Suddenly they swayed with laughter, put their heads down on those movable tables, and let themselves go, or looked up weakly at me as if to inquire how in pity's name I could be so devastatingly comic. One lad in the rear of the room stood up, leaned against the movable table, and slipped to the floor; he stayed there in helpless merriment—I see why they screw down the desks in most schools; it is to prop the children up—he waved a hand back and forth aloft and murmured again and again, "Pass up your poetry!" as if it were the very height of the ridiculous.

Long after this they gave me the answer to the puzzle. A substitute teacher, one of the old disciplinary type who simply could not manage youth once it had had a taste of freedom, used to scold for the whole period, they said, but invariably she would end with a screaming command to "Please pass up your papers!" These youngsters passed up every paper they could find, even scraps picked up from the floor, all of which, to their daily delight, she accepted! The very phrase "Please pass up," therefore, had become dangerously explosive; and when I, a teacher, had tossed it at them so unexpectedly, it had acted like a bomb.

"So will you please pass up your poetry!"

But while they writhed helplessly, gasping out their merriment, I noted three girls who had not joined in the excitement at all; erect as chimney stacks in that moving throng, they were smiling at one another in a most secretive and knowing way. Instantly I knew that I had caught my first clandestine poets! I visualized the very type of blankbook, perhaps carefully hand bound, in which they wrote! There would be a romance, unfinished, of course; a diary, kept for a week and a half; much doggerel verse; imitations of Robert Louis Stevenson and the favorite poets of their early childhood; and, perhaps, that rare good thing on which my search was bent. They would not be aware that it was good until someone had told them.

The bell rang for the end of the period. The class gathered themselves together and began the rush out. They waved to me as they sped by; all were smiling, and the eyes were gay and alert; from some came a happy, "See you to-morrow!"; sure signs, all, of the right sort of friendliness without which I could not work.

As the three girls began to leave, however, I stretched out my hands and said, "But *your* poetry in particular I want." How did I know! That exclamation was immediately written large on their faces. For they had been writing secretly; not even their mothers were aware of it; and they were confident that not one of the three would have told a single other human soul. How did I know? They never did find out. That was my secret, divulged here in print for the first time.

They locked arms immediately and began to sway; two of them giggled, and I knew I had them; but the third looked at me steadily and said, "I have nothing—for you."

The pause after *nothing* was too deliberate to miss. It was a blow—how may one doubt that youngsters can use language! —and I recoiled visibly from its effect. Sensitive to reprimand of any kind—perhaps that is why I never use the weapon against children—I felt that this was, without any doubt, a rebuke to my impertinence. That night I wrote in my notes:

> Just because they have been friendly and have listened to your stories and have laughed at your jokes, don't presume that on the very first day of acquaintance you can step into the privacy of their lives and begin to demand things. Intimacies of this sort should be more gradual than the outward appearance would lead you to think. Go slower. Be more patient.

Fortunately, in that emergency I knew some of the strategy of retreat. I turned away from the embarrassing position of facing them and began to open and close the top drawer of the empty teacher's desk, making it bang considerably each time. Looking children in the eye is, seemingly, the way for authoritative persons; it must be so, for they prate so much about it; but it is never the way, so I have discovered, to achieve the private relationships essential in the pursuit of things of the creative life. The surest method for holding a confidential talk with a child, I always insist, is for both to hang out a window, each looking the opposite way; and the best results are obtained if the feet are banging on the floor within. Why the noise is an important accompaniment I leave for the professional psychologists; I only know from much experience that silence is sometimes just not the right setting.

She made quick amends, sensitive undoubtedly to the effect of her unintentional thrust. "If I have done anything," she said ("She *has* done something!" I noted to myself, my head turned in serious contemplation of the drawer), "I don't want it made the subject of that laugh." That great guffaw, she meant, which had burst forth at my phrase "Please pass up your poetry."

"Don't be afraid of that," I replied. "When you get to know me better you'll find I wouldn't do anything like that. I am a writing person myself. There's nothing in the world I like better to do. I've been writing all my life, ever since I can remember. . . . This is the poetry drawer." Sudden change of subject, always a good trick; much banging of the drawer amid laughter at nothing at all. "Just drop them in here and I'll guard them like the queen bee's jewels."

"Oh, we're late for gym!" a shout from one of the gigglers, and they were off at a mad tilt.

Some of the technique of approach I knew, but not much. Of one thing I was sure, however: place must be provided for the reception of material. One cannot say, "Give it to me." It requires a special kind of courage, which the creative life does not cultivate, to walk up to any person and present the things of one's private endeavor. There are those, of course, who can do this thing; but they are the ones who have received all the credit in the past; they are the bold, insensitive ones; and, in my judgment, they are not those with the greatest creative gifts. Artists are fearful of judgment; they know too well the inadequacy of their efforts; they are tortured by experiences with misunderstanding—by failure, in short. It takes a special courage, even for adults, to take one's manuscript to the corner mail box; painters do their three years' toil of paintings and quail before the detail of packing and shipping to the exhibition. In the artist's life it is the hard-boiled business or literary agent (or the thrifty wife!) who has the strength to perform these essential functions. Much more are these fears operative among children.

II

The impersonal drawer worked. The next day two bulky volumes were dropped into it; then a laugh and a scurry of fleeing feet. But there were only two, note, at the first catch. The third of the trio waited to see what sort of reception these would obtain. Evidently I handled them with the right kind of appreciation, for on the fourth day she approached my desk slowly; under her arm she carried her precious book. This was the one who "had nothing—for me."

I remained very, very still. She looked at me steadily for a moment as if to say, "I know I'm a darn fool. I don't know you and I don't see at all why I should give this to you." Then slowly she opened the poetry drawer and tenderly laid her book with the others. I hadn't the heart to say a word as she walked slowly away.

In those three volumes I found only two things of the sort for which I was searching. All the doggerel and splay attempts to find language for fugitive imaginings were there, but only two were, in my sense, good and really creative.

One was a lullaby, done the year before—no wonder there was hesitation in exhibiting it to a stranger!—but nothing in the pages that followed showed anything worthy, a fading off, rather, into the usual imitations of standard rhymings. The lullaby was the real thing, but the youngsters themselves did not know this; they had inadvertently tapped the very source of creative effort, but without someone to show them the value of their find it is natural that they should pass it by and succumb to the demand for standardized materials, especially when they are the only ones that secure public approval. The Indians of Old California, it is said, preferred the pebbles in their streams for ornament rather than the gold; the gold was easier to work, but the pebbles lasted longer and were more acceptable in barter.

Let us examine this lullaby, which is common enough as an expression of young-girl interests, but not by any means commonlv expressed:

THE WIND IS A SHEPHERD

The wind is a shepherd;
He drives his clouds
Across a field of blue.
The moon puts her face up
Behind them now
And sings a song to you.

So sleep, my baby,
And the wind will keep the clouds,
And we'll look at them tomorrow,
Me and you,
As he hurries them through meadows
And they lay them down to rest
In a field of blue.

The situation is old—all genuine life situations are old!—but the language design that pictures it to us is unlike any other in the world. Even the verse form is not a standard pattern. This unique quality of individual freshness is always present in the outcome which we call by the name of art. Nothing just like it has ever appeared in the world before! There is a criterion to start with. If one is able to recognize this outstanding distinctiveness one has opened a world which the world itself often ignores or notes only to reject.

Because children have not been too much molded by the prevailing taste for the copied article, it is easier for them, I suspect, to produce their own individual and preciously private art; and possible because they have a more ready access to the source of all creative activity, that inward world of unreality; but if their product is not received with the appreciation and respect which are its due it may never develop; and if it is not allowed to grow through its natural stages, something of personality dies. For the individual spirit—I am stating my faith—is itself something that never appeared in the world before; if allowed its fullest development it would transform the world for the world's good. My own belief is that the creative spirit was given us for just that purpose; but we have always missed its perfect manifestations because of our devotion to another faith.

The general approval goes to the imitators. We set up models for everything. We dress so much alike as to lead one critic of manners to suggest that we had practically reached the stage of a common uniform, one sort for each sex. In one year we stand stiffly erect or bind ourselves in whalebone or Piccadilly collar; in another we slouch and go in for looseness generally. But whatever we do, we do in unison, each fearful of showing a sign of the unique individuality with which we have been spiritually endowed. We think, and even pretend to feel, in the prevailing mode. We joined in the jeers that greeted Henri Rousseau's early exhibitions and left him dying without enough sous to purchase the cheapest pine box; but we crowded the gallery a few years later to see one of his jungle pictures when it was announced that Chicago had purchased it for ten thousand dollars.

The demand for one form of standardization is supplied by the publication of millions of copies of books of etiquette. A few of these, of course, have a higher purpose than to supply the proper phrase for all occasions of living, but, in the main, their great sales represent the universal hunger to conform, to annihilate one's individuality of thinking and feeling. Perhaps the greatest humiliation, this side of criminal conviction, comes of a knowledge of having failed in social conformity. Thousands said, "Pleased to meet you!" and were unaware of their ridiculous confession of social inferiority until William Lyon Phelps placed it on his *index expurgatorius* whereupon they all began a hysterical practice of the equally ridiculous "How do you do!" But there is no rest, I am mean enough to say, to the pleased-to-meet-you group. They are fated forever to be always just a little behind the times. Before they have all learned their "How do you do's!" there will be a new convention of greeting. Even if I knew what it was destined to be I should refuse to divulge. Maybe it is because I like people best when they strive to be nothing better than themselves.

One learns early in life that the expressing of one's creative individuality does not pay. The sure way to become disliked is to express one's real self. Disliked? Hated, rather. If one disbelieves, an easy proof is near; for one may at any time, with a little practice, reach into the sure current that runs quietly within us, wherein flows our honest reactions to the life about us. The truth is always there, the truth as we see it, contradicting all the polite agreements that are voluble on the surface of daily living. Reach within and pluck it out for a single day and see what the world will do to you! Now it is the cultivating of this individual sense for the truth which is the beginning of wisdom, even though one declines to be so impolitic as to try it on a conventional world; but to wall it up so that it is beyond any possible reach, until, indeed, the possessor is finally unaware of its existence, that is the Great Stupidity. It is those who thus immure their birthright, however, who teach the young that its naïve self-expression is an unholy thing.

The artist, of course, has just never conformed. He dresses the way that suits him, and, unless he is a portrait painter, he need not bow the knee before even the powerful gods of society. He lives in despised neighborhoods, not because he likes dirt, but because he thereby slips out of the clutches of that merciless conformer, the Price of Mere

Living. Of course he appreciates the beauty of the tawdry, but he dwells where he does mainly to escape the enormous price exacted of those who are compelled to live between the proper numbers on the proper street.

I have proof enough that *The Wind Is a Shepherd* would have been ignored by the standardized adult. And the reason? Very simple; the rules were broken: the verses are in partial rhyme, using the forbidden "identical rhyme" at that; they do not conform to any regular meter-plan; and—unforgivable!—they harbor an undeniable solecism, an illegitimate case relationship between appositives!

It may be that you never noticed all that as you read. Perhaps you caught only the picture of the little make-believe mother sheltering her own as they watched together the shepherd and his flock in that far-off heaven. But the effect of the thing—and the feel of it—do not concern the standardized person, who is essentially a law enforcer; feeling, sympathy, pity, emotional understanding, these are not in his pack. He believes, and with good conscience, too, that in all cases the woman taken must be stoned. Is it not the law?

Painters will recognize this as the typical academic point of view: there are rules of art; if one does not conform to the rules the outcome is failure.

The other attitude, the unacademic, is to inquire what the art effort does to the recipient. If it affects him in a fine way, then it is art; if the rules have been broken, then the rules will have to be changed. At this hour of writing, for illustration, very few persons would question the position of Cézanne or Matisse, at least not openly, for these two artists have become the vogue. To be sure, they have in their time broken all the rules of the academy, but the rules are now being revised to fit their cases. And what an old story that is!

The adult governors of youth have always been great sticklers for the rules; they naturally side with the academicians; they do not trust their own individual sense of appreciation, itself a creative gift, nor do they try to cultivate it. Of an art product they do not ask, How does it affect me? but, Is it conventionally right?

III

The poem *Youth*, with which this volume opens, has a history which illustrates the point. In a chat with the author recently as she left for college she said, "Do you remember the first day I ever gave any of my things to you?"

"Oh, very well," I replied. "You were a little toddler from the elementary school, a new pupil with us, and you came all the way up to the third floor to see me. You gave me your little bit of paper and hurried off without saying a word."

"You were being tested that day," she said mysteriously, "and you never suspected it."

"I'm sure I never did," I rejoined. "Tell me all about it."

"You didn't know what a terrible thing it was for me to go all the way up to the third floor among the huge high-school pupils."

"Oh, yes, I did."

"My first week in a new school, too. Well, the little verses I gave you, I had offered to my teacher in the old school. I was vain enough to want to see them printed in the school paper. She read them coldly right before me. I felt myself congealing. She didn't like them; I could see that before she was half through. She handed them back without a single touch of feeling. 'They are not up to our standard,' she said. . . . Then I came here."

"And you tried them out on me."

"Yes. She said they were not good. And I *knew* they were good!"

"Of course you did!"

"I was testing you, to see if all that they said here was true, to see if you were just like all the others."

"And I wasn't, was I!" I exulted. "Do you recall what I did?"

"Yes. The next day you came downstairs to see me; and you talked about the verses excitedly, and we laughed and enjoyed ourselves; and you printed them. And everybody who read them said they were good. And they *were* good!"

"They probably didn't rhyme," I joked, for even after many years she was still vibrating from that first cold contact with an academician. "And," I whispered, "they probably had a misplaced cæsura in the ante-penult! But what did we care about that! We liked them, and that was enough for us!"

Of course, for all the years of her sojourn with us, she went on producing furiously, editing the school magazine in her senior year and presenting the astonishing lyric *Youth* as her farewell to childhood. Turn to it now and read it. There is the beauty of reminiscence in it for those of us who still cherish the things of youth, and all the more because youth has gone from us forever. And there is, too, a gentle rebuke to all academicians; but, alas, they would never see the point of that. Even if they did, I have no hope that they would ever admit it. The old guard dies but never surrenders!

Chapter IV

NO LOVE WITHOUT PROPINQUITY!

My experience with this unusual and distinctive manifestation of the creative spirit, as illustrated by that rare find of *The Wind Is a Shepherd* among the mere imitations in those childish notebooks, had not been sufficiently extensive to make me sure of the next steps. It is quite clear now that our initial procedure is, at least, one of the right ones. Since the publication of *Creative Youth*, whose aim was to depict a school environment that fostered creative activity and to present some of the concrete outcomes, I have traveled thousands of miles visiting and conferring with others who have made similar finds. Rich artistry among children is simply universal; and teachers and administrators in encouraging numbers are already awake to its possibilities for personal education. In many a conference we have shared experiences wherein I have received confirmation of the general application of those first adventurings.

In judging the worth of these intimate and personal offerings, we generally agree, one must rid oneself of all the customary technique of literary criticism. The academic point of view must simply not be taken. One is in a region of new forms and, possibly, of new laws. Of course, this is hard, for all teachers have been trained in the academic tradition. They are sensitive to abnormalities in script, in punctuation, spelling, verse form, and particularly in grammar. Well, they must teach their eye not to see such things at all, to regard them, indeed, as comparatively unimportant. There is a grammatical error in the Lord's Prayer, but only academic persons would ever be disturbed by it.

We seem to be in accord, further, that one must beware of regarding as important only those themes that adults believe in for children. Moralizings about being good and silent and obedient, even certain types of imaginative stories, and, in fact, much of children's outward show of interests, have possibly been put upon them. Social expectation is a terrific force. As yet we do not really know what comes up naturally and unbidden from the deep sources of the creative life and what is summoned to appear by the overpowering convention of "what every nice child should be thinking about." An openness of mind here and an ability to stand some shocks are most essential. But of that theme more later; it is too important to dismiss in a paragraph.

Most of us would admit, in addition, that having uncovered a bit of the genuine creative stuff one must begin the cultivating of a liking for it in the child who brought it forth. Strange as it may seem to the uninitiated, it is not often a thing the children themselves would prefer at first among the many offerings of their mind or hand.

Outside approval is here most important. You, their friend, like it and show them that you like it. "Oh, that?" they say in surprise. "If you like that——" and proceed to produce more for you, but usually this is not "that" at all, but just the old conventionalizings; so you say nothing, reserving your approval for only that rare thing that "never happened in the world before"; although you may, when the time is just right, talk to them about this astonishing and unique quality. You wait; and when the individual voice speaks once more out comes your approval, the most potent of weapons to fight the battle against the general liking for the commonplace. "That's it!" you say warmly. "Just no one ever said this before, or in this way. That really is *you* speaking!"

For a long time I waited, refusing to be genuinely moved, until one day the following lines came fluttering into my hand from one of the early group who had begun in marvelous confidence to bring me their most private imaginings:

DEEPEST MYSTERIES

A glorious cloud bounds through the sky;
  I follow and peer, far away,
Where the deepest mysteries lie
  Beneath a mass of gray:

Gorgeous courts and castles rare;
Many knights are resting there;
A prince his princess doth adore
With music never heard before.
Night comes; her darkness brings
  A host of butterflies
With brownies on their wings—
  Then the dreams of night arise!
Hark! A silver bell doth chime:
    Silence time!
    Silence time!

The oak tree bows low
As fairies go,
  Floating onward—onward—
Leaving behind a nightly, silvery glow.

I shoot like an arrow
  Back to To-day;
The land of my vision
  Is swept quite away.
Dreams fly fast!
The gray cloud has passed.

Conventional echoes are here, of course; for, remember, these are children with years of reading back of them and with no one to praise their true unusual lines; but there are also here the clear notes of individuality; it is indeed remarkable that this exquisite child quality should have persisted so long.

II

During that long period of waiting one receives some of the worst possible products. They are often so bad that nothing but superior courage and faith could carry one through. The former standards of language set up by the school drop down, down, farther down than went the famous *Royal George*.

This should give some cheer to those mothers and teachers who try the new way and succeed in stirring up little less than the mud at the bottom; for it is a necessary stage in growth that has not been sufficiently advertised. The creativists have been too busy celebrating their victories of the spirit over the machine; presenting their best accomplishments so gaily, they have been innocently at great fault here, for instead of encouraging they have been well-nigh depressing. Let me make amends for my share of neglect in too often forgetting to warn against the slow movement upward in this important nonproductive period. We must face this slough of despond frankly and with understanding. Transition periods play the very devil with every reform.

The phenomenon is general, then, that while children are learning to find their more perfect native notes they seem to slump temporarily into ineffective croakings. The collection of good specimens is, therefore, incredibly slow. Those who work with children on the creative side are compelled to discard or ignore a hundred attempts while they are getting a mere half-dozen "good ones."

Just one "good one," however—painting, poem, clay figure, song, flash of clear thinking (for thinking, too, is creative art of the very highest)—just one is worth several months of searching. That is a common agreement among us. We know that it will beget others. And two is more than twice as effective as one. A half dozen is treasure!

When visitors were admiring the fifty paintings in the annual exhibition of the work of The Children's School of Acting and Design, in New York City, one of the directors was heard to say, "Oh, but you should have seen the two hundred awful ones we threw away!"

The creativist, however, likes the bad stuff, if it is the right sort of bad stuff. He gets to know that it represents one of the stages upward and rejoices and admires and pins it up on the wall. Smudges of inconceivable comicality one finds him adoring, to the mystification and disgust of the conventional person who has been taught that the only admirable result is a perfect pattern. Even those attempts which he eventually "throws away" have a quality that is really worthy of admiration—artists who drop in know what it is right off and talk about it understandingly—but it takes time and much experience before one learns to see this good side of the bad ones.

Here is one of the visible differences between product-education and creative education; the former turns out really good patterns in large quantities, seemingly every hour on the hour; the other brings forth a continuous mass of low-grade stuff. Another visible (and audible!) difference is the degree of interest and sincerity: the most splendid absorption of the workers in the standardized product-manufactory cannot hold a candle to the fierce self-motivated stirrings of genuine creative activity. But, granted a superior personal urge to do, the creative systems, we all freely admit, turn out a comparatively ragged product; one must pick here and there with care to uncover a "find."

Another vast difference between the two systems, we agree, is that each has its own notion of the use of time; and one must regard this difference, or disappointment and depression are sure to follow those who set up to practice the new way. The standardized curricular education requires "results" each day, each week, surely each month, with an accumulated measurable outcome at the end of each semester; creative education thinks in terms of years, and even in spans of years. *The creative school cares not how inept and slovenly a lad may be this whole term if it sees something personal and fine taking slow possession of him.* During the past twenty-five years the older school has reformed its method considerably in the face of public criticism; in my boyhood it used to expel youngsters each month, out of school and into the job, with the regularity and efficiency of an electric cherry pitter!

One may err sometimes in trying to mix the two systems. After reading an enthusiastic book on the creative side, or after hearing a modern school lecturer, some teachers go forth to their classes, rap for order, explain the idea, and then, with the best intentions, assign a lesson in "creative work." They are most disappointed when they do not get a roomful of results the next day. "Fraud!" they are apt to cry, and give up forever.

Once upon a time a determined visitor came swiftly into my ninth-grade class and objected because the boys and girls were absorbed in writing. She stalked up and down between the movable tables, examined the children's work, greatly to their amazement (and to mine), and then announced, "I see no reason why this work should be done now."

I hurried her to a distant corner of the room and begged her to lower her voice. Fortunately the children were far away in their own land of Make-believe; for a moment they looked up dreamily, as if drugged, and then fell back to their work.

"I have come from Illinois," the visitor said, in a tone of almost benumbing authority, "and have only a few hours in New York. I sail for Europe to-morrow morning. I came here to see creative appreciation, and I think I should be permitted to see it!"

"Do you expect me to turn it on and off—like a faucet?" I asked, trying my best to warm this lady's professional hauteur.

She said, "I am Professor of the Methodology of the Teaching of the Language Arts in the Blank Normal College" (I paraphrase the titles, but, my word for it, the original was even more comic), "and therefore I know enough about the practice of teaching to request that you stop this written work and demonstrate creative activity."

"But, my dear Professor of Methodology et cetera," I told her quietly, "though I should do just that and you should stay all morning you would see just nothing at all."

"My own thought exactly!" she snapped back. "Because exactly nothing would happen!"

She was a most forthright person, but, as I heard later, and suspected at the time, she was really ill, poor thing, and had been sent off on a year's leave of absence. (Overwork, they said, but I diagnose Too-much-methodology.)

I lowered my voice still more, so as not to disturb the children. (They were really engaged on a creative job that had absorbed their complete attention, creative appreciation in abundance if the visitor had had any educational vision at all.) "I have a good stop-watch in my desk," I whispered and pointed out the window to Morningside Park. "Do take it and go out, right away, into Morningside Park. Sit down on the grass for an hour and time the dandelions. As the seconds tick away, watch their growth and then come back and report to me. Do you know what you will say? Exactly nothing has happened."

I found the watch in my desk and tried in dramatic whispers to press it upon her. She edged away from me. I stalked after her. "Do go out and time the dandelions!" I begged. But she would not. She did not speak. She would not even stay. She went quickly away from there.

The creative educationists have a different notion of the use of time, and they have a different notion of results, but give us our own time and we promise to more than match the old school in even its own conception of "results." A high-school principal has just presented me with the report of an extensive examination of the work of his pupils in school subjects and in social, athletic, and other extra-class activities. We were both interested in seeing how pupils trained in a famous "free activity" elementary school had fared in comparison with those who had been subjected to more controlled school procedures. This "free" school is almost wholly a creative education school: it has no curriculum, no "subjects of study," no textbooks, no recitation, a total absence, in short, of the usual machinery of lessons and assigned tasks.

In this report the pupils from the "free activity" school were found among the leaders in every phase of school life, including what was to them the strange and novel experience of academic subjects. Their trained resourcefulness had carried them everywhere to the top.

One of the girls' colleges has recently made a similar report upon the work of students whose preliminary training has been creative rather than predominately college preparatory.

III

Those rare offerings which are superior, because they are expressions, either partially or wholly, of the mysterious life of the spirit, should be given the advantage of a conspicuous setting; and none other save these. Here, let me admit, is where my fellow workers meet me with strong if friendly antagonism. They would display all, the good—in this special sense of good—and the bad; for the sake of encouragement they would even admit the faithful but unknowing copiers.

Our disputes are most fruitful, but upon this point we remain at the end each of his own opinion still. Our difficulties are irreconcilable, because, I think, each has a different educational aim in view. Should children be led to believe that creative activity is natural to all and, therefore, that it is not to be stressed as a gift of the special few? Then, of course, one should draw no attention to it by this isolation of the unusual ones. But if the aim is to raise the standard of all, so that even the creative activity heretofore accepted as good may be discarded by the children themselves as inferior, and, further, so that even those superior ones may reach forward to a higher and unsuspected superiority, then, discounting the risks, the leaders must be given their conspicuous positions of distinction.

We must be always reminding ourselves that the rare expression of individuality is not only ignored by the world or rejected as inferior, but that even the child-creator must be taught to recognize its outstanding character of worthiness. Therefore he must be given many opportunities for companionship with it; it must be advertised constantly to eye and ear. Mixed with both good and bad it is lost, and, as is usually the case, evil is easily dominant and characteristically corrupts good manners. Remember the first law of mating: No love without propinquity!

"We produce excellent creative work," my friends tell me often, "but it reaches a certain stage and stops. We do not touch the general high grade of your output. Tell us why."

My invariable answer is that I so manage the controls that the highest approval goes solely to that work which bears the mark of original invention. To be sure, one must perform this office so adroitly as never to be suspected of controlling at all. No matter how crude the product, judged by the usual standards of adult perfection, the work with the individual touch is given the place of distinction; and there it is kept for all to see. Not that other contributors are neglected or made needlessly to feel their lack; there are many easy devices for the encouragement of those who have not yet found their native tones. Experience with the better brings, not contempt, as the proverb foolishly avers, but affection; and a real knowledge of the good will always drive out a taste for the inferior.

In some instances, however, I have come upon an experience which seems to contradict the notion that a liking for the strange output of the creative spirit is an acquired taste; although it does mightily back up the argument for distinguishing the good and ignoring the conventional. It often happens that a few pages of fine work, printed well and distributed for all to contemplate at leisure, will bring an instant and sincere general appreciation. I have seen a wave of approval sweep quietly through a group, touching even those inarticulate ones who have never heretofore given the slightest sign of possessing artistic standards. The power of the thing has struck them; separated from the mass it has had its opportunity to work upon them.

I speak of the linguistic art because that is the field in which I have done my main work; but it serves here merely for convenience of illustration. Workers in other media will instantly recognize the application to their materials and will have no difficulty in making the translation. There is little difference between us, as a matter of fact. We have none of the absorption in our special field, nor have we the insurmountable barriers separating one another, so destructive to childhood education among the academic "subject" specialists.

A teacher of eurythmics, who had been a most encouraging listener in a series of discussions of creative activity, writes:

> You rarely speak of the dance, because, I suspect, you have had little experience on that side of the creative life, but that is all I see. "All I see are periwigs!"

She is quoting from Helen Elizabeth's *His Excellency's Maker of Periwigs*, which we give in full on page 198.

> However [she goes on cheerfully], every poem and picture and clay model, every invention even, and all the wise thinking of these children are just eurhythmics to me. I go away each time fortified in my conviction of the value and importance to complete living of self-expression through mind-and-body-release. You and your group are giving me hourly proof of the infinite resources of my own special field; they confirm my own experimentations; they show me the way to further and unsuspected gains and possibilities. For fear that this may worry you as criticism, let me hasten to remark that I prefer it this way. Most talks on my own subject bore me; they all say the same abstract things in the same abstract manner. Your "child-stuff," as you call it, those concrete crudities in language, color and what-not, help me to think in terms of body, mind-control and movement. It stimulates me to make the translation, gives me a sense of inventing and creating myself; and I have no difficulty at all with it.

IV

One must be patient, but eventually the childlike quality of the real thing gives courage to many silent ones who have in the past been benumbed into repression by the overpowering vogue of the impossible adult thing. The work that they see us admiring is, after all, their own language. That, indeed, is the main reason, in my opinion, why it works upon them so powerfully. Into their silent hours it plays its spell, evoking similar secretly familiar music. The friendly welcome, which they know will greet anything of theirs, does the rest; and soon another gift joins the collection, to take its place for general admiration, and to work, in turn, its own powerful contagion.

The control of the guide is here all important. He must know instinctively, by feel, as it were, the texture of the native offering. At the right time he must be able to say, "This is the real thing!" That probably is his greatest bit of teaching, if one call it teaching. Mere talk about it, without the experience, is often misleading, and results in bringing forth at times the bizarre and the silly.

Listen to the words of H. Caldwell Cook, who in England was finding ample illustrations of the creative life in young boys, his "littlemen," as he calls them in his books, long before we in America had begun to think seriously about the matter:

> The development of personality demands freedom of expression and every opportunity for the exercise of originality. . . . For such work as this the teacher must sink himself in the needs of his class as a group of individuals; must take care not to thwart natural inclination, and yet at the same time insure that the efforts of his pupils do not run away into fantastical conceits, blind imitation, affected novelty or sheer tomfoolery. He must know a good thing, actual or potential, when he sees it, and must neither let pass unchallenged any work which the author could improve, nor reject as unfit anything which has life in it and a true inspiration, however feebly showing. He must be ready to set aside all con-

vention in method, all blind rigidity or discipline, and pin his faith on no stereotyped formulæ. There is a different way every day.

V

Those teachers who know how to keep their praise for the good thing just a step in advance of the moving group are agreed upon one other interesting and puzzling phenomenon. The results of each year are better than the year before. A new class arrives; seemingly one should begin at the beginning; on the contrary, the immediate product is in advance of last term's beginning. This goes on from year to year; the whole output continues to grow in an upward gradation of superiority.

We thought at first that the explanation lies in the improved skill of the teacher. That is a partial element, no doubt, but we have much evidence—in teachers moving to other schools, for instance, where they must start at the very beginning again—that something happens to the exact *locus*, making it a place, like improved ground, which itself produces a better and better crop.

Some of the improvement may be due to the spell of the fine work of previous classes decorating wall and shelf. Some comes from the spread of interest and enthusiasm which reaches the lower group in daily social contacts. A certain expectation is set up in advance. The changed personalities move about among the younger ones and evoke desire. Or those younger ones who have the urge in their secret hearts become conscious of a possible future fulfilment and begin thinking about it early. This "spread" is notably obvious if the school uses the assembly period as a natural outlet for the presentation of child-engendered projects. Dramatic work, for instance, will improve from year to year if the younger children have been touched by seeing, hearing, and feeling the advanced skill of their slightly maturer mates. Of course I am referring to creative work in drama, not to memorized patterns of adult construction "coached" in the adult manner.

The really mystifying side of the phenomenon of "spread" is that new pupils are absorbed swiftly and do not become retarding laggards. At first their work may be conspicuously far below the natural standards all about them; but they soon step into the unusual region and are at home. Once we moved into a larger building and thereby doubled our enrolment. The new fact-taught and memory-drilled group, motivated largely by fear or by the dangling rewards of "marks," exhibited for the most part the rawest manners in matters of the spirit. We had anxious moments while they frankly laughed at our verses and at our other manifestations of creativity, and even more anxious ones when they innocently displayed their own uneducated taste. "Even in the art and science of jokes," said one of our own, "they are in the primary class." Then they dismayed us further by making honest demands for changes; our refinements were understandingly annoying. But we postponed and waited. They came around eventually and without really being aware that a magic influence had been working upon them. Propinquity once more overcame indifference and scored a mating.

Another fact, not so puzzling, is that the "spread" may often radiate from one spot and influence a whole community. I have in mind the work of a high school teacher of biology who was so much more than a biologist that all forms of creative invention, of scientific urge, of active regenerating living, had gradually become characteristic of other classrooms besides his own. When he left that school the life went out of it. For a while it traveled forward on its own momentum; then it slowly retarded; finally it stopped and became just a place where boys and girls learned things from books and teachers.

It had taken many years to make that school conscious of the illimitable powers that lie hidden within, to build up a faith in self-education, to overcome the fears of clumsiness, to stir up, by right praise, a knowledge of the enormous value of self-discovered wisdom; it took but a short time to lose all those gains.

Administrators should be aware of this slow progress and should know that class growth and school growth, measured in terms of superior accomplishment, are possible through a long range of years, although a new set of children are arriving in each classroom. In one elementary school I have watched the tempera painting mount slowly from infantile daubs to high-grade expressionism. It took eight years to arrive at its present stage, but the work, done now so easily and naturally by children of the primary grades, has values, in color, composition, and imaginative idea, which make their pictures not inappropriate for framing and hanging as decoration for one's own home.

This gives us another clue to the difference in method between the education in information and the education in taste. The fact master can get only so far in a given year; his work, therefore, is easily measureable for grade-placement. Taste is a matter of living; and no bar has yet been found for its expanding power. In the range of the development of creative ability grade-placement and grade-expectation are almost meaningless terms. Very young children in my presence have hit upon Emerson's theory of the over-soul, upon Fichte's demand that deus must of necessity create an objective world, and even upon Kant's general conclusion concerning the limitations of sensory experience. In their own language, of course. Permitted, the creative mind will go far.*

Further, fact education has always insisted upon drill; education in feeling comes through experience. One appeals mainly to memory; *creative education demands an exposure to an influence.*

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*When I told Professor Bode of the youngster who had found for himself one of the great truths of Kant's *Critique*, he said, "But that is not so remarkable; Kant's *Critique* is really very simple; it is the language that has bothered us, not the philosophy."

One sees, therefore, why the creativist, when he would explain his unique effects upon the personalities before him, insists so much upon "environment" rather than upon courses-of-study-the-same-for-all. He means all those influences—art product, child performance and group performance, constructive materials, physical organization that permits freedom, administrative attitude toward control, teacher attitude toward the creative life, teacher suggestion that provokes creative activity, and information from every available source—which, acting directly upon individual desire and individual appreciation, stimulate the forces of the creative life and stir them to continuously superior activities.

These journeyings about the country have brought me a surer knowledge of the ways and means of enticing the creative spirit to expose its unsuspected powers; but mainly they have shown me that the schools everywhere are putting on the latest styles in education. With characteristic hustle America has suddenly adopted "creative work." Undoubtedly two great natural urges of childhood, to draw and to write, have been allowed gratification. The results in a better developed personality are good, but I seem to notice among teachers and administrators a satisfaction with the natural products. If a child punches clay, splashes paint, or writes a rhyme, that seems to conclude the educational obligation of the school. School officials show me the primitive work of children, announce with pride that there has been no instruction, and end with a satisfied, "Yes, we have creative work."

My sympathy is wholly with the attempt they are making to give a chance to the individual personality, so in all kindness I ask: Is it not the business of education to improve ability, to add to strength, to secure superior results?

At the risk of erring in taste I should like to emphasize the fact that in this chapter I have suggested a way to increase enormously the potential power of the creative product, or, rather, to draw more powerful achievement from a greater depth in personality. The picture is that of the teacher playing her special kind of admiration upon the best work of a group, skilfully and unobtrusively drawing attention to it, deliberately permitting it to stay in the mind like a well-placed advertisement.

The presumption is that the teacher shall know what is the best work of a group. Unless she does, much is lost. One may have "creative work" and present the results for the world to see; it will remain in a definite and interesting infantile stage unless genuine creative education has a place in the classroom.

Wherever I go I see splendid work of children ignored, even in the most progressive of modern schools. The pattern copiers too often win the larger approvals; the crude attempts at individual expression are passed by.

To secure teachers who know the good from the bad will take time. We cannot adopt a national creative program and have success overnight. One should be aware of the slow nature of our undertaking and be cheerful about it, nor demand too much at the start. The first outcomes, in enlarged freedom, are most worthy. Here and there we shall have a superior result. At first we shall credit it to gifted children or to social advantages or even to the I. Q., but eventually we shall find as a constant factor a teacher who understands some of the mysterious ways of the creative spirit, one, too, who appreciates and approves its crude and original manifestations.

VI

The versifying of the three youngsters, luckily captured on the first day of adventure into the region of creative education, would have gone the way of other unencouraged child-artistry, we suspect, had we not deliberately brought it forth into the warming influence of our best praise. The mere assumption of interest in these early scrawling attempts to express the emotional side of their lives was enough to stir them to a continuous making of verse and prose which lasted the whole five years—and still continues; but conviction of its worth was made doubly sure, in my judgment, when the distinguished setting of print gave it its frame and its wall and its fine picture-light.

I watched the stately responsibility of leadership come imperceptibly upon them; eventually they became the center of a group of equally free spirits, boys joining early and soon outnumbering the girls. That experience in leadership they carried with them to the colleges as a possession more valuable than learning.

Without seeking or thrusting forward, that tiny band of creative artists were accepted wherever they went as natural guides and counsellors; in a short time we began to hear of them, from Yale, Harvard, Michigan, Vassar, Barnard, whatever the place, as the chosen representatives of their own contemporaries for high position in student literary activities.

At the end of the five years with us, some of their youthful work in verse was placed for all to see in the pages of *Creative Youth*; the results, in the approval of their own generation, judged by letters alone, would seem to indicate that the expression of their creative lives, brought thus from obscurity, has been heard and welcomed, literally, round the world.

Poets say that no form of appreciation gives them the same inexpressible thrill as that which comes from children. To the general anthologist these writing men and women are often cold, but a request for reprint in books for the young brings an unfailing warm response. "Our books will fade out of the public mind," one of them expressed it, "but if some scrap of our work is handed on to the young we may continue to live. That would be one of the desirable forms of immortality!"

Today I turn over the pages of a splendid series of modern readers for the elementary grades, and, here and there, side by side with the poetry of Edna Millay, Eugene Field, Sara Teasdale, Holmes, Rossetti, Frost, and Robinson, I find the verses which were made by the boys and girls during those experimental years. This, really, is an astounding thing. The composings of their private hours, contributed casually without much thought of their worth, a waste product of education, really, for which no value had hitherto been found, these have been judged worthy of a permanent place in the lives of youth. And this year I find the verses of still others of them set to music, along with the best work of our major poets, in *New Songs for New Voices*, illustrated by Peggy Bacon and edited by Louis Untermeyer and Clara and David Mannes.

Chapter V

WORDISTS

One of the earliest of our discoveries was that of a youth with a remarkable facility in clear-cut phrasing. His product bore no resemblance to the primitive free construction that has been illustrated here; in fact, it was so sophisticated and mechanically expert as to suggest adult editing. The following contribution was held up for some time until many casual interviews convinced us that this eighth-grader was an advanced student of words:

FROM A MINARET

Scarlet skies, purple palms,
Ragged beggars whine for alms.

Orange glow on roof and dome,
Caravans returning home.

Temple, mosque, minaret
'Gainst the sky in silhouette.

Scarlet skies turn maroon;
In the east a crescent moon.

Faces veiled, sparkling eyes,
Shadowed streets in purple guise.

Lanterns gleam here and there,
All is silent everywhere.

Hark! a lute now is played;
'Tis some lover's serenade.

Soon the lute sounds no more—
All is silent as before.

The form is strictly conventional, the verse monotonously end-stopped, and the themic trappings are just what one would expect of rhymesters who write with no experience at all of their subject. The general effect is that of insincerity; one is not moved by the piece; but the words, one sees, are put together with the care of a devoted workman.

After our first chat I classed him as a "wordist," a term for those chaps who become enamored of words in themselves as an interest aside from meanings. The only reason that I know about this group is that I was one myself; to this day a word or phrase will stir me when the context may not interest me at all; indeed, I must be on guard lest this vice lead me to sacrifice sense for sound. Writing men and women know all about this; perhaps the absorption in the symbols as such is the beginning in them of the flair for the craft of writing. Authors tell me of their early fascination for the signs of the zodiac, even; of their porings over hieroglyphics; of a playing with words as other children play with blocks.

I tested him by my own experiences, and he matched up instantly. "Have you ever read a dictionary?" I asked him.

"Yes! Have you, too?" He was alert in an instant, for up to that moment he had fancied that he was the only person in the world who had ever had such a silly interest.

"I used to mark the place," I confessed, "and turn the page down, reading it just like another book."

We talked of our finds. *Abracadabra* was a mutual favorite. I used to go over the house muttering *Abracadabra!* (Still do.) He gave me *festinate*, which I had missed, and aired his liking for *fanfare*, *sequin*, *demoniac*, *sesquipedalian*, and the like; and I swopped with *hobbledehoy*, *provocative*, and *predestinate*, which I always manage to get into my writings somewhere or I could not be happy.

Once he brought me four lines called *The Moon*. They began:

> Withered harlot of the night!

I must have been visibly stirred; certainly it was a shock. He noted that—with eerie enjoyment.

"Aren't words powerful!" he said.

"I'll say they are!" I agreed.

"I meant that white moon you see in the daytime. Pockmarked. Sickly pale. As if she'd been out all night and was just tottering home."

I stared at the lines.

"Are you going to print them?" he grinned.

"'Withered harlot of the night!'" I repeated softly. "Boy," I said, "you've spoiled the moon for me for life!"

II

It is difficult to say whether it was due to our encouragement or to a native gift that would have survived even the coldest of schoolroom environments, but his muse grew increasingly prolific; he learned somehow to subdue the word for the idea, in consequence of which his work began to take on a flavor all its own—the hall-mark of the individual once more!—until one April day two years later he gave us a spring song—and *there's* a theme to test one's originality!—which, I judge from its constant reprintings, must already have given satisfaction to thousands:

SPRING VENDERS

Oh, blessed be the venders in the street
That flaunt their jaunty splendors in the street:
Violets and daffodils,
Whirligigs and windmills,
Bright balloons,
Rusty tunes,
Doughnuts strung on spindles!

Yet the doughnut-vender never sells his crullers;
Just the odor serves to make the children sigh;
While balloons and toys sell only for their colors—
The flimsy stuff they're made of who would buy?

No one wants the music or the flower;
Who flings a coin to hear machinery start,
Or pays for blooms that wither in an hour?
He only buys the April in his heart.

This lad had been playing with words long before we became acquainted and was aware that he could fashion astonishing effects out of them; so he would not be the one to give up his gift because of discouraging elders. To be sure, he was still practicing in secret in those early days, for no teacher had ever become interested. His school exercises had required from him none of that fascinating game with words which would keep him up at night in sheer interest in the play; in fact, and this is the remarkable thing, I think, his school writings were rather dull, and certainly they were full of blunders; no one could have guessed from reading them that the author was a wonder-worker with words. So he lived two writing lives, as all fated writing men and women have learned to do since Eve held her first dame-school, one for the pedagogues, pale and undistinguished, and one for his own hours, alive and really brilliant.

It was my luck to find out about the other life outside of school—probably because I could speak his language. So I admitted the gift to the schoolroom and saw it grow and grow until shortly I was to hear important figures in the literary world wax eloquent in his praise. And that came about in this way:

Secretly I had sent some of his work to a national poetry competition, and, out of the thousands of poems entered, his verses took the attention of one of the judges, a distinguished poet and critic, who wrote, "There is not one of his poems in which I do not feel a touch of something more than talent. He seems to be a genuine and exciting discovery, the one of the entire group most likely to emerge. In fact, I have not heard so interesting a new voice since Countee Cullen and George Dillon."

III

This, understand, happened when he was still a boy in school. Naturally, I was delighted, but there was one person even more thrilled, and she had a better right to her thrill than I to my delight. That boy was pretty far along in the practice of his gift when I came across him; but she had known about it long before that, at a time when it must have been a very tiny gift indeed, perhaps not visible to the ordinary eye. But she was his mother.

She told me that almost from the beginning of speech he had shown a kind of interest in words which, to her prejudiced eyes, seemed unusual, but that she was reluctant to admit even to herself that it was a gift at all. "You know how mothers are!" she smiled at me. "But I liked everything he did, naturally, and I let him see that I liked it. Perhaps I shouldn't, but I did. That's all I did; and—that's how it happened."

At another time she said, "But there were many things that I didn't do. I never interfered, for instance. Perhaps I am not a good sort of mother, but whatever he wanted to do I let him. He would stay up half the night to scribble and draw and write music; I let him. He ate impossible things at impossible hours; I let him. Or he would be too excited to eat at all; I let him. He was most prolific when in the bathtub with a board rigged across for writing, sketching, and composing songs; there he would splash for hours singing an interminable melody; I let him!"

This same story I have come upon many times, of a mother's wise interest in what must often have seemed a silly thing; invariably it tells of strange liberties permitted when the creative life swings to the surface and takes possession, becoming so urgent in its demands that lessons are neglected, food is not eaten, and even the necessities of sleep are forgotten. "I often thought I was doing wrong," this mother admitted, "to let him go on and on that way without stopping him, but, somehow, I had an unreasoning faith that I should not discourage him in the thing he most wanted to do, and therefore, that I should permit nothing to stand in the way of it."

In this case, of course, the mother was right, as the sequel proves; but she was an exceptionally wise and self-effacing mother. (That was her gift!) She is one of those who recognize latent ability early, encourage it with interest, and give it a chance to grow. That's nearly all there is to the process; but that is a great deal.

Whenever I speak of this kind of manifestation of the creative life I stand braced for the protesting questions that follow. Mothers and fathers want to know if I would let children be guided by every silly whim that seizes them. Of course I am setting up no such rule of life. Some silly whims are not at all silly; the point is that one must be able to discriminate among them.

That the matter is difficult no one will deny. If we were sure that our son would become an Edison we shouldn't mind letting him litter up the place with bits of wire and broken incandescent bulbs; but as we aren't at all sure, we peremptorily order him to drop that nonsense, clean up the floor, and get that lawn mown, or clear off that sidewalk, depending upon the season of the year.

The personal problem here is of enormous importance: how to tell the foolishness from a kind of genius! Because the first signs of the creative gift look surprisingly like foolishness. A boy makes caricatures on scraps of paper, puts eyes and noses on all the big O's in his books, copies carefully all the cartoons out of the newspaper, draws airplanes crashing in midair, paints sunset scenes in orange and red that would make the cows stop munching, and in the meantime lets all the real work of life go to smash.

Perfectly silly. Of course. It is always silly in the beginnings. And even comic. So is the beginning of a cold. There is nothing funnier than a sudden, unexpected, and devastating sneeze. And nothing sillier.

An all-powerful, all-absorbing, duty-defying interest is an important symptom; it should never be ignored or belittled by those, parents or teachers, who presume to the difficult office of maturing young life.

IV

The young artist who is the subject of this sketch, however, had intelligence and common sense that could be appealed to. Without any interest whatever in school tasks as such, nevertheless he did the minimum essentials and went on to college. It was a kind of dull imprisonment, those years of bookish lectures and bookish pother among bibliographies; it always is for the artists who have already found themselves; but he gave those precious years to the social convention that would make scholars out of everyone—everyone, think of it!—foolish as an aim, of course, and fruitless in its results. His mates there, however, were wiser in appreciation of artistic gifts than his faculty, one is grateful to discover, for they raised him to high rank among the creative group and gave him the distinction of their elective approval.

Collegiate editorship came to him in the freshman year, an almost unprecedented thing; creative youth is quick and fearless in risking appreciative judgment. Issue by issue he touched the monthly pages with his unusual and astonishing self. In distant places men of taste, turning the leaves in kindly tolerance, are stopped before this wise and skilful thinker; a critic and a publisher take notice; an anthologist, with an uncanny gift for catching the earliest notes of the superior ones, puts him in his latest volume. The young man journeys to an annual collegiate poetry tourney, reads his verses, and returns with the palm. The official college rubs its eyes, murmuring, no doubt, "See what our scholarship hath wrought!" and in commemoration makes a gracious gesture with a medal of gold. These are the news items I note complacently from afar.

Not long ago I saw his name on the outside of a magazine, headlined as one of the important contributors. "Men are already receiving him as an equal," I thought, "and they are prizing his work. It has come earlier than I had hoped, but I knew it would come."

The two poems that follow are taken from a page of recent published work. Truth to individual feeling is here, as of old, touched with a balancing and rectifying humor, but it is an astonishing truth that takes us by surprise, and a humor so deft as to be there only for those who have the wit to catch it:

MARKET REPORT

You know about the lyric cricket?
  You know his grievious end?
Well, then you know a man should purchase
  No stock in me, my friend.
But you may tip it to your broker
  I strongly recommend
Amalgamated Ants and Beetles.
  They pay a dividend!
A share in me is no investment
  I warn you now, my friend,
Unless you want a song for interest,
  And have a hearth to lend.

FUGITIVE AT DUSK

I must seek ambush in some deep recess,
  And flee the jurisdiction of the moon,
  Or I will be attired in livery soon—
A lackey to her regal loveliness!
  There lodges something servile in us all
  That lives to run at beauty's beck and call.

I must take flight before the sun is down,
  Before the garden grows too arrogant.
  The meanest tree, the most downtrodden plant
Will soon be wearing silver like a crown.
  In this increasing hush I quail to see
  Presagements of a fatal tyranny.

During his high-school years this boy wrote an enormous amount of material, every day yielding its contribution of work self-imposed and required by no rule of the school. Included in this mass are poems for occasions, too personal and local for anything but the moment's enjoyment, plays of all sorts from vaudeville sketches up, and everything musical from songs to operettas, one of which was given before the school with a success for that audience equal to a Broadway hit.

This was his workshop period; therefore little of the output is worthy of final preservation. Nor had he nor had any of us any thought at this time of making contributions to the world; he was living and working, and was encouraged so to live and work, with an intense interest in the moment, careless of ultimate effects, sincerely not trying to please any other group than that of his own contemporaries. In his senior year, for instance, he turned out the *Four Edens*, presented here on page 243, as merely a gay illumination to the study of medieval history in Daniel C. Knowleton's class.

If his hours of toiling could be pictured in a graph, day, night, summer, winter, on foot, in bed while sleep is held off, free in solitude or wracked in the midst of polite chatter, then one might be able to convince the formalists in education that there is no drudgery like that which the creative life compels. "But you don't teach them to do disagreeable things!" they continually do cry. How little they know about us! When one binds the law willingly upon oneself, as the artist, the craftsman, the thinker and the leader must do, one needs no artificial work assignment!

The defect of the creativist argument is that we conceal all evidences of the weary toil in presenting our final and life-consuming results. We charm our opponents with our art and lull them deceptively into a sense of easy workmanship; and there is something of sportsmanship in us, too, we hope, that disdains boring others with our purely personal and private troubles. We see about us too many asses braying how much they paid for things.

We defeat our cause again when we insist—as I do stoutly in the case before us—that our teaching is negligible but that we do permit. Of course it is important to know what to permit; and one must confess that right praise and tactful indifference make for a powerful pedagogical equipment. It is difficult, however, to convince the informationalists of that other truth, itself a bit of important information, that life is also spun from within.

So once more we confuse the argument, for we propose to present another illustration from the young poet's maturer muse, saying nothing about the weeks and months that went to its making, denying the right of any school-mastering, elementary, secondary, or collegiate, to take the credit from the author himself. However, since the core of our pedagogy is that art must be felt and not learned, we know that these illustrations will be more disturbing to the orthodox than all our argumentative preachments.

REHEARSAL

I heap my palms with sand,
  And let it all sift free
In order that the hand
  May learn passivity.

(He must have practice young
  Who ever would be trained
To leave some songs unsung
  And many cups half-drained.)

I turn from each embrace
  Before the fire is spent,
That I may make with grace
  The last relinquishment.

THE CONTRACT

I must stop to heed the dusk,
  For I have signed;
Industry and peace are for
  The blessed blind;

I could coldly waive it off
  If it were just
Moral obligation or
  A sacred trust . . .
I must heed the terms of earth,
  For I have signed,
And the clause concerning dusk
  Is underlined.

Chapter VI

BACK TALK

My GRAVEST problem with earnest teachers who wish to learn how to reach helpfully into the creative life of their charges comes from a lack on their part of any memory of their own childhood that would make them compatriots of the young. They have surrendered to the adult tradition so long ago that all vestiges of individuality have well nigh disappeared. It is only with those who retain, in some part of their being, an egoistic celebration of the unusual and unique self of their younger days that I am able to work, with hope of conviction and understanding.

To these I often present that part of my personal life, naked and unashamed, which is still creative and as irrepressible and foolish, therefore, as any of my self-centered youngsters. Communication with children on the level of their secret and private imaginings is comparatively easy for me just because, I fancy, I have never considered that that sort of thing is unimportant. The story of my own revelings among words as a child has been of such help to others in getting them into rapport with similar rhapsodic, and perhaps idiotic, creative activity of children that I use the excuse to tell one part of it here.

II

Words were my first important interest, my mother tells me, the strange words of a newspaper, but by its means I inquired myself into a knowledge of reading and the mystery of word signs at a very early age. And that interest has never died down. Since I have written for the popular magazines as well as for technical journals, my work has traveled to every part of the world—as letters prove often enough—and my circulation—magazine and book not personal!—is numbered in the millions. And last spring I published my fifth book.

I say this just to prove that my job is respectable, for my former teachers emphatically did not think so. Many times I was "on the carpet" for it and twice came within a hair's breadth of expulsion. I can safely say this now without offense to anybody, for that type of teacher is practically extinct.

What hounds they were on the scent of misspellings and wrong capitalizations! And they were the world's champions of neat penmanship, and clean paper with your name at the upper right-hand corner (where no one else in the world ever desired it to be). With a brass-bound ruler they walked up and down the aisles during the composition hour and whacked the fingers of the lost souls who failed to jot a comma before *every* "and."

They said that we would never get a job and that the world would not love us if we did not put a heavy stroke on the downward slant of letters; and if we pressed too hard on the pen, in the endeavor to have the world love us, we spilled a blot; and two blots on one exercise equaled one visit to the caning establishment of the principal, where we got a job immediately and were a screaming success at it.

To this day I can remember the courage it took to bear lightly on those downward strokes while that grim teacher walked the aisles; and the far-off yells of unsuccessful compatriots caused the hand to tremble. The World War was won in the composition and penmanship drills of the public schools of yesteryear.

Courage? For training in courage there is nothing like it.

"There's nothing like eating hay when you're faint," the King remarked to Alice as he munched away.

"I should think throwing cold water over you would be better," Alice suggested.

"I didn't say there was nothing *better*," the King replied. "I said there was nothing *like* it."

III

But, in spite of teachers, words were my earliest passion and continued to be dominant in my life. I read random pages of the school dictionary for the strange sensation of discovering unheard-of words; I spent my little money for works in foreign tongues, getting indefinable comfort in looking at the unintelligible jargon, learned German script for the sake of writing secret documents, bought a second-hand polyglot Bible, and contrived a dozen secret written and spoken languages.

The only reason I speak of these things is that I know that I am merely telling the hidden story of all word-minded boys and girls. They would instantly understand the following cryptic line:

> 3 15 13 5 1 18 15 21 14 4 5 1 18 12 25
> 20 15 14 9 7 8 20.

And they would laugh, because that is the very first attempt to maintain secrecy in code, and it is the very easiest to guess. After a few of these messages have fallen into the hands of the enemy creative invention suggests more involved and difficult schemes. A chum and I used to write to each other with Greek letters spelled from right to left like the Hebrew, with the lines from bottom to top like the Chinese. But we did not write many letters after the first.

Secret spoken languages do not usually advance much beyond "hog Latin," like "Ill-way ou-yay o-gay ith-way e-may?" for "Will you go with me?" but after many trials with complicated spoken languages I finally hit upon one that is quite simple and always mystifying. Strangely enough I used it only for private conversations with myself, talking aloud as I walked along unfrequented roads; but once I blazed away in it before an astonished group, of which I shall tell later.

Reading the sounds of a word backward had always been a habit of mine. I do not know when it began. In school the words of irritated teachers fell backward in my mind and there they were silently vocalized; my lips may have moved, but I knew better than to speak aloud. Nor did I wish to let anybody in on what was a very private and secret pleasure. So the oft-uttered word "attention!" became instantly "nushnetta!"; "stop that!" shifted to "pots tath!"; and "close books!" was "zohlk skoob!"

When an older person talked too much in my nine-year-old presence I had no right to say aloud, "Shut *up!*" but I often got great satisfaction by whispering to myself, "Tush *puh!*" At those times the tension in my mind was relieved. "Tush *puh!*" administered at the height of tedium, was what the best psychiatrists today call good mental medicine. Certainly it increased my boyish cheerfulness.

To myself I called my language "Cab Caught," which, translated, means simply Back Talk. Remember, if you care to practice it, that it is the sounds and not the spelling that are made backward. For that reason it led me into a study of sounds. I found that the letter Y was just the long sound of E, and that W was the u-sound in "Coo." So "you" became "oo-ee" or, shortened, "wee"; and "was" turned into "zuh-oo." Also I found that X was only KS, and realized that initial H could not be sounded when put at the end unless you gave it a little "huh" (like "tay-huh" for "hate").

Once in the quietness of a public travel talk I astonished the meeting by blurting out, "So do I!" and was silenced by laughter from the audience and by a quick "Ssh!" from my astonished grandmother who sat by my side. The traveler had remarked that the natives of one part of Africa formed their plurals by putting a clicking sound in front of their words, instead of employing our belated custom of adding the sibilant.

My penetrating "So do I!" was the subject of much inquiry afterwards but, you may be sure, I had nothing to offer in excuse or explanation. However, in Back Talk the plural of "loof" (fool) is "zloof"; and the plural of "koob" (book) is "skoob," and the plural of "cham" (match) is "zitcham."

IV

Only once did I break loose and pour forth my pent-up soul in Back Talk. For reasons unknown to me my family had sent me to board in the country for a short period. They were a pleasant enough if ignorant family, and I quite understood, with the unerring clairvoyance of very young children, that they were desirous of keeping me happy and a source of income, but I also knew at the first glance that their ways were not my ways nor their gods my gods. Things that my family believed in, like talking, writing, and reading, this alien family called sins. Writing and sketching in blank books were sins because they were wasteful of time and paper, but the reading of fiction was an almost unforgivable sin, especially when done lying flat on the floor.

I argued for my rights and was instantly guilty of the sin of disrespect and disobedience. I became silent but unconvinced and was condemned for the sin of obstinacy. Other sins accumulating, my beloved book *The Count of Monte Cristo* was taken from me. Nothing was left but to announce that I would write to my mother and insist upon being brought immediately home.

They blanched at that, I noted, and I figured that I had them, but they startled me by placing their notion of righteousness above their obvious interest in money. For the sin of ingratitude, therefore, I should be made to go to my bed on the third floor without an attendant and without a light.

Now I had peopled very corner and twist of that crooked stairway with lions, hobgoblins, and demons rare, and each night as I had braved them I had put them one by one to rout, but on this dark and unprotected journey I knew I should be no courageous and valiant conqueror.

In the doorway I turned on those people whose ways were not my ways and whose gods could never be my gods. Ordinary speech left me, but in one blast from my good old trusty Back Talk I annihilated them and sent them hurrying for the village doctor.

"*Mad* wee!" I cried in my rage. "I *tay-huh* wee! Dna *wee!* Dna *wee!* Dna *wee!*" pointing to each of them vindictively. "*Law* vuh we! Mad zloof! Mad zloof! Mad zloof!"

("*Damn* you! I *hate* you*!* And *you!* And *you!* And *you! All* of you! Damn fools! Damn fools! Damn fools!")

"Damn fools!" was a favorite phrase of my father's to sum up his notion of all persons who disagreed with him.

They took me quickly in their arms and soothed my hot brow and comforted my torrential tears. The doctor was seriously impressed and ordered a sweetly pleasant drink. And they all accompanied me up those perilous stairs—"Mad zloof!" I whispered to myself joyfully—and they stayed by me with a shaded lamp aglow.

My last remembrance of that night is of a sudden sitting up in bed and of a victorious shout, "Mad zloof!" followed by a hysteric shriek of happy laughter.

My mother came the next day and took me home. I drooped and smiled faintly, told them how sorry I was to leave them, extracting, in short, all the dramatic comfort I could from the pathetic situation.

Always in a group of youngsters I discover those who have similar experiences with the fascinating plaything of language. And I have found no child who is not interested in the story of my own adventures with it.

V

Somewhere in the files of an old magazine is an article entitled "Berkshire Gabble" which recounts the attempt of three girls to add necessary words to the English language.

They needed a word, they thought, for the place where the cloth goes when it wears into a hole; and one for the ending of roads which you never see but wonder about, and one for the silence that comes that is silenter than the silence before it; and one for what you are feeling when you are obliged to say polite things you do not mean. They accumulated a list of several hundred such words, slipping them into their secret talk along with common English words.

And, of course, everyone knows about the portmanteau words in *Alice in Wonderland.* There must be a great variety of such languages that have never been recorded. One little friend of mine, whose delightful name is Happy, had a complete language of her own before she spoke English at all. English she understood, of course, but her replies would be in her own invented language. Later she spoke English for ordinary uses, but for private talks with her mother and father and for those sleepy words just before slumber, she spoke low and earnestly in her chosen tongue. William T. Schwarz, the artist, knows this language, which he learned in many loving hours spent with Happy, and should some day write an account of it. I have often listened to Happy. The language is complete for every need, and it has abundant seriousness and delightful humor.

While in the Army, Mary Louise, Captain Watson's eight-year-old daughter, introduced me to "Face Talk," a language which we perfected during many happy breakfasts together. It is not much of a language for speedy communication, as each letter is spelled out by a special turn or twist of the face, but it is marvelously secretive and can be used without detection under the very noses of family and distinguished guests. And it is absolutely soundless.

I used Face Talk in the novel *I Ride in My Coach,* which I was then writing, but as so many persons have asked me for the whole alphabet this seems a good spot to place it in print for the first time. The capitals in parentheses show that this slow-moving speech used the letters also as word signs.

FACE TALK

A—Alligator-snap, a silent bite. (AND)
B—A slight bow of the head. (BEAST!)
C—Cheek-puffs (good round ones). (CAT!)
D—The sleepy dormouse. (DON'T GO)
E—Monkey face—E being the sound the monkeys make—the tongue thrust directly back of the closed upper lip, forehead wrinkled in the highest.
F—Frown. (FOLLOW!)
G—Grief, the mouth shaped like a croquet wicket. (GO)
H—Horror, whites of eyes showing, but mouth closed thin and cheeks sucked in. (HAVE)
I—A slow closing of the eyes. (IS NOT)
J—Joy, the eyes rolling up and almost disappearing. (WOULDN'T THAT JAR YOU!)
K—Kiss-pucker. (CAKE; ANYTHING ENJOYABLE)
L—Lower lip protruding. (LIKE)
M—Make-a-face, the tip of the tongue showing disdainfully. (WAIT A MINUTE)
N—A delicate, noiseless, inquiring nose-sniff. (NO)
O—Mouth open as if saying "OH!" in mild surprise. (ON THE)
P—Pride, the chin thrust forward. (PLAY)
Q—Question-face with plenty of forehead wrinkles but with mouth closed. (QUICK)
R—Roll of head on neck, as if the collar bothered. (ALL RIGHT)
S—Smile. (SPEAK, SHOUT, SING, SNIGGER, SAY SOMETHING)
T—Teeth-showing-in-a-snarl. (THANK YOU)
U—Underlip tucked-in. (UNDER THE)
V—Vertical toss-up of the head, like a horse trying to loosen a tight rein. (VETO; SAY NO)
W—Slow wink of the right eye. (YOU ARE WELCOME)
X—Kiss-pucker and smile together, since X is just KS. (EXCUSE)
Y—Yawn. (YES)
Z—One look at the exact zenith. (ZERO; SAY NOTHING)

A single negative shake of the head marks the end of a word; several negatives, the end of a sentence. Rapid blinking of the eyes means "Message coming," which is kept up at intervals until the answer is received, a roll of the head (R) meaning "All right!"

VI

This public exhibition of some of the creative undercurrents of my own mind will not increase my standing with certain of my contemporaries. They will depreciate me lower, however, when they learn of another fancy of mine—so many intelligent young people share it with me as to make me believe that it is not just imaginative foolery—which pictures these certain ones of my contemporaries as not contemporaries at all but senile persons, the young life in them long since dead, a trembling great-grandsire in incompetent charge; their dignity, then, becomes just stiffness of joints; their silence, inability to think; their serious conservatism, simply fear of discovery. For a youthful mind, at whatever chronological age the body, is still living on the fresh and boundless current of the creative life, it has never denied its own turbulent and incoherent spirit; it has never admitted as folly its wilful imaginings and its surprising and ever-new reflections on the world, the flesh, and the devil. It was Charles Eliot who said that in his long term as president of Harvard College the fight on any progressive measure was waged usually by the old radicals against the young conservatives. Age begins with a denial of the spirit of youth; with some it comes surprisingly early; with some it never begins at all.

To those who keep the spirit alive, communication with youth is easy, for genuine companionship is possible among those only who confess the same follies. Perhaps that is why the learned, the perfect, and the wholly good are never much of a success in soul-winning. I have yet to find the dominie who would sense the marvelous personal confession in the Master's, "Neither do I condemn thee."

Chapter VII

THE NATIVE LANGUAGE OF CHILDHOOD

I have a secret from everybody in
the world-full-of-people
But—I cannot always remember how
it goes.
HILDA.

AS SOON as children begin to speak they attempt the language of literature. During those early months and years, when they are struggling with the difficult medium of language, come occasional flashes of achievement. Parents have always known about this; but outsiders make it the subject of their jokes. Anything under the heading Bright Sayings of Childhood is always good for a laugh. Our jokes, however, exhibit our natural antagonism; or, rather, our lack of understanding. Literature is simply unique self-expression; yet at the start we strive for conventional self-suppression and laugh away, or scold away, that individual utterance without which literature is not.

In a short time, under our loving but ignorant drive, the native gift of language may hide itself away in private dialogue with doll or toy, or carry on solely in the spirited domain of silent dream-life—out of which the child comes, stumbling and awkward, to receive our chidings for stupidity —or it may die out and seemingly be lost forever.

Mothers have been aware of this more surely than teachers. Each mother knows that she has a wonder child, one who talks to her in a language adequate for every need, who inquires with intelligence, whose reasoning is direct and well-nigh miraculous. She cherishes the startling beauty of every casual utterance, but she learns early not to speak of her wonder aloud. That bored look, the smile of cynicism, the jest that labels her as "proud parent," these and other manifestations of an unbelieving and prejudiced world soon silence her.

Lately, however, an international interest in the unique contribution of childhood has brought courage to mothers; out of secret drawers have come the precious baby-books which record questions, fancies, soliloquies, indignations, and protests even. I have only to mention this in public and then, when the lights are being turned off warningly, they wait in the darkening hall to tell me, with a wistful and timid eagerness—so few there are who will listen to mothers—of this and that startling expression of their very own. I urge them to keep careful notes. "The child," I tell them, "is now expressing his real self; so you may find out much about him now which will serve later. Later he may not believe in himself; you it is who must give him the strength of self-faith, for you know—you have seen and heard."

My mail is full of such records. One night, just before tucking-in, Bunnell says,

Mother, did you see the sun go to bed? . . .
He pulled the wooly white covers
Up over his head. . . .
Are his blankets soft and white and warm
Just the same as mine?

"At another time," writes Bunnell's mother, "he asked me if the clouds in the sky were the people who had gone to God"—this in a family where there is no attempt to inflict any theological theory, grewsome or otherwise.

To childhood the life within is one of the sure realities. Gretchen, thinking of clouds, says, very, very slowly,

I see the white clouds floating low
As though sheep in a meadow

I see a man wave his crook
In a deep blue shadow

I see the house
Where the shepherd lives.

This, of course, is literature. What else? All the elements are here: rhythm, design, unique insight, and the perfect picturing of thought and feeling. Some of us have tried to teach these children language! They already possess a language adequate for all the purposes of their little lives, but we do not often discover it; nor do we always recognize it when it appears right before us.

In the high-school classes Sandy had begun suddenly to weave a strange pattern of words; it was, really of course, an old gift that had disappeared into the depths of personality until aroused and brought to the surface by a school environment which welcomed and paid high prices in social approval for genuine self-expression. He surprised himself, I think—for the voice of his inner spirit was unlike anything that he had ever sounded before—but he must have drawn strength and confidence from the delight of those around him; he seemed to grow visibly into manhood before us.

There was another result, however. I may be wrong in tracing it to Sandy, but I have always felt that the strong home interest in the boy's new development was caught up by the little brother Jack. In those confidential hours at eventide he began to talk to mother in a new way. One day she came to see me with the story of the awakening in Jack of a self-expression totally different from Sandy's but like Sandy's in that it was all his own.

Although it was winter and the family were in the city Jack talked exactly as if he were back in the summer home, in his bed beside the open window. Children, of course, do not give titles to these quiet pictures but when the mother wrote it out for me she called it

SUMMER LIGHTS

I love to see how many kinds of lights
I can find on a summer's night

I love the white spots of phlox
In the gardens
With the moon shining on them

I love the white spots of stars
Twinkling in the black sky

I love the white spots of fireflies
Sparkling
On the edge of the woods

And then, besides,
When my brother goes out to see that the chickens are in bed
I see his lantern
Bobbing in the garden

And when I go to bed
I like to see the light, way off in the woods,
That comes back from the windows
Of the old stone house

And, last of all,
I love my mother's candle light
On the little table
Beside her bed

Mothers have given us our best revelations of the creative spirit in the young. I pay my tribute here, as I have done elsewhere, to one mother who listened to the beautiful voice of the child artist and had the fine courage to give the result to all of us.* Hilda tells us much of the reality of that

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**Poems by a Little Girl*, and *Shoes of the Wind*, by Hilda Conkling (Stokes).

inner life when she says, in one of those quiet moments beside her mother,

> I have a secret from everybody in the world-full-of-people
> But I cannot always remember how it goes;
> It is a song
> For you, Mother,
> With a curl of cloud and a feather of blue
> And a mist
> Blowing along the sky.
> If I sing it some day, under my voice,
> Will it make you happy?

II

Most of the speech of children that we hear is not their own language but the imitative forms, thought, and imagery of their elders. The adults that surround a young child go in eagerly for teaching their own speech; they ignore the native gift or drown it out with doggerel rhymes, set phrases, adult polite idiom, verses and prose made for children by adults. School readers, *Mother Goose*, and books such as the exquisite *Child's Garden of Verses* have their place in childhood education, but these excellent materials, wrongly used, may really deprive the child of certain valuable experiences in self-expression.

So children talk like their primers—saying, "See the," for instance, an infantile idiom that is purely bookish to Americans whose phrase is "Look at that"—or they bang out bad rhymes that obstruct their clear and beautiful thinking, or they force their language into imitations of adult poets. Now, imitation, however excellent, is never art; and proof is ample that even very little children have a language of their own whose outcomes are undoubtedly art.

For, notice, in the illustrations already given, that children speak naturally in a form that we adults are accustomed to call poetry; and without any searching for appropriate use of the medium. That is because their minds are wholly intent upon something real within them; the language is instinctive and really of secondary consideration; they fashion it to the significant form exactly as other artists handle their medium, swiftly and without disturbing thoughts of standards outside themselves. The child poet—without ever knowing that he is a poet—"weaves to his song the music of the world and of the clouds," as little Elizabeth so wisely phrased it when she wrote of

THE PIPER

The sun shines on the brook and makes it look like silver
And in a cave where the winds are all asleep
A piper plays a tune;
He weaves to his song the music of the world and of the clouds.

Elizabeth has other lines which I never read without thinking that she, all unwittingly, is giving us the picture of the real voices of youth which are lost because of the storms we elders set up in the name of education!

> The sun is leaving the heavens and the wind is waking,
> And the music of the piper
> Is fading
> Like a shadow.

The younger boys and girls who compose Camp Van Daal at Woodstock in the Catskills put their energies continuously into creative activities and for the sole reason that that is the way they prefer to spend their summer. The range is enormous, from boat making to poetry. A printing press seems to be the center of camp life. The authentic note of the real thing is there, I found; and it is so natural and to-be-expected-of-anyone that it really flourishes. On a rainy day a boy writes—and you must know exactly how to read this or you will miss some of the joyous "magic of discontent"—and then, of course, he proceeds to set up and print:

What is the magic of discontent
Which sows the seed so wild and sweet
Of rain, of rain, of rain, of rain,
Of rain upon the roof?

In the camp notebook of one boy were found these strange but altogether serious lines; they were written late on the day when death had come swiftly and inexplicably near him:

THE LILIES AND THE ROSES IN HIS GARDEN

Death passed by my door
And left me with a chill
So that I sought the fire.

Death passed. I saw him:
He was tall, and mockingly robust;
On his head was an opera hat and on his feet a dirty pair of shoes.

For a moment I found myself wishing that when Death went by
  I might hug the fire and the fire's warmth, with the door close
  locked;
That I might leave the pavement to Death.
I hoped that I would not become intimate with Death until I
  had exhausted Life's friendship. . . .

What matters it
Whether I dwell with the lilies and the roses in the parlor of the
  House of God
Or with the lilies and the roses in His garden?

Only the artist may appreciate the work of an artist; and adults are standardized persons without the gift of language that marks one's speech as unique. Our chief aim—reflected in textbook and curriculum—is to become expert copyists. We go to the length of studying the exact phrase to use in the meeting of *any* friend ("How do you do!" we cry out in unison, like a chorus of cuckoos!), or in writing *any* letter, be it of affection or condolence; it is the public demand that has forced the telegraph companies to supply us with the wording of the only seven ways to express our congratulations or seasonal wishes!

Yet, sad thought, the unstudied naturalness of the early "poetry" of childhood will thrive among those only who have ears to hear and judgment to approve. It is a terrible law of training that we shall have whatever we approve. If our standards are conventional the artist-child in our care will surrender his most valued possession with hardly a misgiving. Only through constant exercise in a favoring environment will the artist nature survive. The rare rebel, of course, is of different mould; he fights and suffers but remains an artist, mainly, I often think, because he refuses to give up his gift of seeing and thinking and feeling as a child.

Quite often, however, he does not rebel; outwardly he conforms, but about his real self he is forever silent except before someone who has comprehended. A teacher tells me of an Italian lad whose work she found and was about to proclaim before all when she caught his protesting face and was mercifully silent. Their friendship lasted for years, and he continued producing all that time, but no one else dreamed of it. In a sort of pagan world he lived, translating all the cold science about him into myths of his own. After a thunderstorm had been explained to the children he wrote:

One day Thunder
Wanted to play a song,
So, taking his bugle,
He let out a mighty blast.

Thunder's friend, Rain,
Wanted to join in the chorus
But Thunder wouldn't let him;
So Rain wept!

People on Earth said,
"What a storm!"

After he had gone up to the next grade the teacher inquired cautiously if the boy had been writing those strange individual fancies and received the assurance from the teacher above that nothing of the kind had happened. All the while a notebook was filling up, and later he brought them down to the only one who understood. Here is his reaction to the complete theory of earthquakes and volcanos as presented by the course of study:

A real stomach is Earth;
It gobbles and gobbles
And never seems to tire.

But every time the Heat is too great
    It bursts,
And the things she has eaten
Creep upward from the bottom of her huge stomach.

But when Heat has gone away
Nature has repaired Earth's stomach
And again she starts to
    Gobble, gobble, gobble!

One must not here bring up the question of poetry. From an educational standpoint we are interested solely in the persistence of an individual language, in its adequacy for the child's purpose, and in the child's demand that it shall be a secret from "everybody in the world-full-of-people."

III

I had taken upon myself to find that lost personal voice of childhood in the eighth grade, but Nell C. Curtis was finding it abundantly in the third grade.* Hardly a day passed in those early years that we did not contrive meetings to show each other this and that discovery of the strange,

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*See *Boats*, by children of the third grade and their teacher, Nell C. Curtis (Rand, McNally).

powerful speech which children rarely disclose to others but which they have "under their voice," as Hilda tells us so unerringly, "a secret from everybody in the world-full-of-people."

But one day she met me with disconsolate brows. I believe she had just come from an informal conference of teachers and parents. We walked along the halls in silence until she said with a kind of mournful humor, "They have called me—a gifted teacher!" It was an accusation, and she took it indignantly, as she knew I would. That is the excuse they give for not finding what we experience daily. "Gifted teacher" always ended the argument, we knew, and sent them back with renewed strength to their everlasting struggle to make inartistic and conventional adults out of children. We hated the phrase.

"I want you to come with me," she said firmly, "right now; I am going into the third grade for about thirty minutes. I want you to stay with me and watch me, to see," she smiled, "if I have anything up my sleeve, any 'trick' that anyone else couldn't have."

I agreed to go and to watch. She turned to say at the door, "Thanksgiving will soon be here. They may tell me about it—in their own way; and, if they do tell me, it will be good—because their own way is always good."

She walked in thoughtfully but did not once eye the class professionally or call it to attention. She seemed really to be looking out of the window while, musingly, she let fall the word Thanksgiving.

Then she wondered—really wondered—as if to herself, what she, Nell Curtis, should be thankful for. It was so well done, the simulation of genuine inquiry—so different from the conventional mastery of a class by means of the drawing-out question—that it took me completely off guard, stopped me in the awkward position in front of the group, where I had not meant to stay, and set my mind wondering, too; while one could almost feel the thinking going on in the little bodies before us.

Then she just said nothing at all, while she continued to gaze thoughtfully at the bare trees and grassy hummocks of Morningside Park. With the children who knew her she was not afraid of silence; rather she comprehended its great value for little bodies. They thought slowly; and, so great was the spell of the moment, I thought, too.

I was thinking, I remember, how thankful I was that at last I had reached the age when I could afford to be honest with my own thinking; I was amusing myself with the thought that I no longer needed to try to be anything; that I could, for instance, cease trying to write and speak correct English, or even cease trying to be a gentleman; for, I was saying to myself, so long as one needed to *try* to be a gentleman, that was a sure sign that one wasn't one—when a boy spoke thoughtfully "under his voice"; and another followed, and another.

They were not using the accustomed classroom speech, I noted instantly, that high-pitched monotone of children reciting before other children. They were conversing in the low, contented, slow-measured syllables of self-communion. Miss Curtis could do that to children; cause them to lose the conventional pose of being other than themselves—if that be a gift, make the most of it!—but I hasten to say that even she could not do it at the first meeting. Many previous hours had gone to make them accustomed to her; little by little, as she accepted (and so approved) the voice of their secret and seldom-heard personality, they lost their fears of alien standards, strengthened the deep feeling of contentment with their own sure ways of speech. And then one day, as on this day, her casual appearance in the room would be a sign for the shy self to speak out.

She had moved so shadow-like to the blackboard that no one was disturbed; they continued to speak on slowly with easy long silences in between, while, with her back to them, she scribbled an illegible shorthand of her own.

During the fifteen minutes or so that followed she hardly ever turned to face them. Once she grimaced over her arm to me, a brave attempt, I guessed, judging from my own feeling, to stay unaccountable tears; and then I turned my back, too, for those mites would never understand how the simple beauty of their speech could affect us olders.

A whirr of buzzers off somewhere in the school, and she stopped and moved quietly away from the board. "I shall need guards," she said. Two girls came forward understandingly and stood beside the welter of unintelligible chalk marks. In another moment someone appeared at the door and the class filed out for the roof playground. The guards produced apples and munched them; they knew they were to keep watch over the blackboard until Miss Curtis could have time to get a notebook and make a complete copy.

The next day, according to agreement, I went in to watch for "tricks." In clear manuscript writing Miss Curtis had placed all their statements on the board, naming the author in each case. Among repetitions they proceeded to choose the best; decided which should be combined with others; elided and amended here and there. Hardly a word from Miss Curtis. In an exercise in taste she was not one to impose judgment. I wish I had space to record their quiet acquiescence or cool disagreement and final compromise.

Eventually it became the following Hymn of Thanksgiving. The phrases are the work of children unaided by adult suggestion but, on account of time, the parts that belonged naturally together were combined and grouped by Miss Curtis and two other teachers, the whole being used by the third grade as their contribution to the Thanksgiving Assembly.

A HYMN OF THANKSGIVING

I

We give thanks for the beautiful country that lies around us
We give thanks for the grains and vegetables and fruits prepared
  for us
And we give thanks for the growing trees and flowers about us

II

We give thanks for the rain that falls and the sun that shines down upon us
We thank God for the mountains that tower above and for the rocks that give us shelter and beauty
We give thanks for the sky above us and the earth below us and the birds that fly between earth and sky

III

We give thanks for the cloth to make sails and the wood to make boats that sail on the water
We give thanks for the little streams that flow
We give thanks for the tide that rises and lets us go out in our boats
We give thanks for the sea with fishes in it
We thank God for all the living creatures on the earth

IV

We give thanks for the fire that warms us
We give thanks for warm clothes and beds and houses to live in
We give thanks for the schools to learn in

V

We give thanks for the beauty and love all around us
We give thanks for all the things that the Lord has set upon the earth

A week or so later, in the elementary school Thanksgiving Assembly, two tall candles burned at each end of the curtained stage, otherwise bare of ornament; a selected group from the third grade came up one by one and told us these their own words of thankfulness. It was powerfully effective, religious, if you will.

IV

Childhood will have no difficulty with literature if it has a chance to develop its own native gifts in language. This, of course, is not the whole story, but it is one of its most important chapters.

Chapter VIII

CONFESSIONS

A YOUNG mother had been driving me to the station each afternoon following the lecture, but while she admitted having a boy of five she contributed nothing about him. It was obvious to me that she had little else in the vivid undercurrent of her mind but the daily manifestations of the wonder and the power and the mystery of him; but she was a young mother and proud; she would not be classified as one who thought much of her own. The fear of the consequences of exposing her love was in her careful eyes, for she was intelligent and knew all about the illusions of motherhood.

Then one day she grew less guardful, sensing in me, I hope, a trusting spirit, and said, slowly and watchfully, ready to withdraw all confidence at the slightest false move from me, "Of course my boy says things. And now that you are advising us to copy them down . . . Well, here's something he said last night, just before he went to bed."

With interest I listened to the delicate phrases; it was the authentic language of the spirit. She glowed as I quietly talked of the perfection of the thing: there was not a word that one would wish to change or to omit; it had all the marvelous economy in the use of material and the swift impact of the sure artist. Before her I recopied the words, placing them in the irregular lining of free verse. "For it is poetry," I said.

The word with all its masterful associations thrilled her, as I knew it would, but she kept to her mood of smiling indifference. "Poetry!" She laughed softly. "But it doesn't rhyme."

"Oh!" I affected surprise. "Are you one of those who believe that poetry should rhyme? Don't you know that rhyme was invented only day before yesterday, as the centuries go; and only by a thoroughly sophisticated people who had arrived at an advanced intelligence? For thousands of years the races of mankind gave forth their finest utterance in the powerful medium that this lad uses so naturally. The Psalms of David are written in the poetry of the ages. Rhyme is a marvelous but unnecessary ornament; a great thing, no mistake, when done by expert artists, but a weak thing and an obstruction of the spirit oftentimes in the hands of any but the technician."

At another time she showed me others, among them these intimate lines,

Do you know what the stars are, Mother?
They're the lights God puts out
So I won't be afraid
Of the dark

"He told me that just before he went to sleep," she confided.

By this time we were well acquainted. "That's when they all do it," said I, making playful fun of her absorbing interest. "Just before they go to sleep. And that is your hour, my fine young mother. Now you have him. You will know it because he communicates to you his most precious thinkings. But you will not always have him, unless you are very, very guardful of your present possession. Boys and girls slip slowly but surely away. The boys are gone at eight often; the girls may linger on until ten. They must be off to their own affairs, the boy to take on the compelling man-things, the girl to her own individual privacies of womanhood. Mothers should prepare for this from the beginning and accept it, for it is the way of nature. But he is yours now. At the hour of going to sleep. When he ceases to share his inmost imaginings with you, then you will know he has gone."

We talked of this, she a little fearful and not wholly klieving. I did not frighten her with too much of the truth, but I was thinking of mothers unaware that their little sons and daughters had already slipped away. I have watched them at times when an unreasoning fear would seize them; they would draw the little boy quickly to them, press cheek to cheek and whisper, "You still love Mother, don't you, darling?"

In half wonder at the truth, but not even admitting it to the upper surface of consciousness, the lad would struggle and give up. "Yes, Mother," he would say, a phrase without feeling.

"Then kiss Mother," she would beg.

Dutifully I have seen him perform the unintelligible ceremony and, released from the mad pressure, rush away to the real affairs of his own life. Love, alas, may not be compelled, and youth may not be stayed.

Having gone so far I am under obligation at this point to warn mothers against a misinterpretation of this matter of securing the confidences of their children. I would give much to be able to shirk my duty here, for what I am now about to say will be resented with all the fierce resistance to facts by which nature has mysteriously endowed motherhood. My obligation, however, is not to mothers but to children. I would save them from the devitalization, physical, mental, and spiritual, that always follows when strong mothers give over their whole lives to the greedy possessing of their offspring. The story of *The Silver Cord* is alarmingly common.

Boys and girls must live their own independent lives. It is right and morally important that they should. She who interferes with that right unduly is wronging her own. Opportunity, of course, should be given for the confessional relationship, but it must never be forced; nor must one pry for the sake solely of one's own personal enjoyment. My fear is that in presenting this method of keeping a healthy relationship between mother and child I may be simply putting a weapon into the hands of those who would sacrifice their own for the orgy of selfish and unbridled mothering.

I know too well the devastating effect of their work upon the whole existence of their children. It gives me a kind of horror when I think of their creeping in at the bedtime hour and, possibly because of my revelations here, subtilely coaxing confidences. It is a relief to feel that I may be making some amends by writing these two disagreeable paragraphs, and I hasten to close this part of the subject.

Needless to say, I must add, that this topic did not come up at all in our conversation with the mother of the little poet; she was too well schooled in modern thought to require it; her danger could easily be that she might, because of her superior knowledge of the subject, swing to the extreme of aloofness and avoidance of intimacy.

There are mothers, I told her, who keep their own through life. The little sure links of confidences have been forged and strengthened during the years, so that in manhood and in womanhood those children still come back to gain once again the strength of spirit which may be had only from those who enter without conflict or indifference into the region of their private living. These are the mothers who reserve the hour of confidence as one into which neither chiding, nor admonition, nor even teaching, is ever allowed to enter; and at no time, though their own soul cry out for relief, do they refuse the listening ear.

I reread the lines. "What do you think of them?" I asked.

"They are beautiful, of course," she returned.

"Is that all?"

"They are poetry, I suppose."

"Oh, yes, they are that," I said. "They quite satisfy my notion of poetry. But they are something else; and you, his mother, do not know it?"

"What is it his mother doesn't know?"

"He is confessing something to you," I said. "He is too much of a proud man to admit in other language that he is afraid of the dark. If you asked him about it—and you must not, if you wish to preserve these confidences—he would probably deny it. But he is telling you, just the same. When he speaks thus in his native language it is important. Some children pass through this fear without harm; to others it is a memory that persists to defeat them later in life. So if he needs you near just now, your voice in the next room or a distant light for protection, see to it. But—if you wish him to stay with you a little longer—you must do it without comment or the slightest sign of knowledge that he has told you."

II

Children's art at its best is always something in the nature of a confession; it admits one instantly into the privacy of personal thinking and feeling. Most good art is confessional, I suspect; therefore it fails when it imitates or poses or attempts concealment. The child knows that his world—the world of home and the world of school—gives its praise to imitation and to posing-as-someone-other-than-self, and he discovers early that it is best to conceal.

Wherever creative work with children flourishes I seek the one who has opened up communication with them on the side of their secret unexpressed selves. She is usually a person who has no objections to anything that children tell her seriously; so she gets nearer and nearer to them, as one might become acquainted with birds; and as the communications develop into confessions she secures the astonishing results that are so often called gifts.

Much of this material may not be printed or exposed in any way. How often even among senior high-school pupils have I received sealed documents marked, "Private! Not to be shown to a soul!" Here is a conflict with the usual school requirements which presume that not only will the pupil's work be exposed but that it is a proper object of public criticism. If the creative life is to have its legitimate sustenance, it must be permitted at times to graze in its own private grounds. A confidence cannot be shouted to the crowd; and the first important creative activities of youth are confidential and confessional.

Even with the communicating doors open the ultimate in self-expression, using the word literally, will never come through. Rather, it seems that there are grades of intimacy, each more intimate than the last—and each with its own language—and that beyond the last are others that must forever remain inarticulate. In my own close relationship with pupils I was forever coming upon astonishing material that had not been shown to me at all: a verse sequence made for a birthday present to a chum; a book of love poems, too personal, of course, for anyone but the other one; and all that type of writing that comes under the heading of diary and commonplace books of private reflections. Sometimes this material would be no different, seemingly, from that which had been shown without hesitation to others, but to the authors there was a tragic difference which one was bound to respect.

III

Probing the depths in this way for the good ore that always lies far beneath the surface, one is always facing possible dangers. The laws of the hidden are never to be quite understood. A confidence may beget distrust, or it may arouse lasting remorse. One of the pictures I should like to forget is that of the sorrow of a youngster of six, which, in spite of our best endeavors, remained with him a frightening experience for months, and only because we had printed his name beside his tiny verses!

The value of my collections of creative activity is due, in my judgment, to the fact that they are not imitations; they have their firm root in the inimitable creative life. About each one I could tell a confidential story. By this time I have learned better to sort out the spurious from the real; and, while so learning, I have come upon personal experiences that make me aware of the delicate nature of the search.

One of the best poems I have ever found in these adventures in creative education came to me not from the author at all but in a letter from one of her dear friends.

However, I believed I had her approval to print, but the outcome was more serious than I may explain here.

The stunning power of the poem, its swift direct recital of a story, unlike anything that had been told in the world before, made me know that I had come upon a rich find. One may guess that by this time I had taken on a collector's zeal in searching for new revelations of the creative spirit, the which I may use as an excuse for any mistake I may have made in handling the volatile material. In my excitement when I encountered the young woman in the halls the next day I talked of the remarkable character of the discovery and neglected to watch the effect of my words upon the real owner.

She was silent while I talked. She said only, "You liked it?"

My sincere praise did not seem to affect her, which was not strange because she, above others of her age, was gifted with poise and control. But she was moved finally to say, by my warmth possibly, "It seems not my own . . . and yet I know it is all of me. It was written in the night after I had awakened suddenly; it was written rapidly and without consideration; then I went swiftly to sleep. There was no change to be made in the morning. I cannot get over the strangeness of it."

I assured her that while it was not common the phenomenon was known. I told her of instances of the same sort of writing which I had in my collection. "The spirit is communicating without the trammels of everyday living, I suspect. Perhaps that is why the effect is so striking; it is the self speaking and revealing itself."

"It is just that," she said. "I know."

I spoke of printing it.

She looked at me in astonishment, but I was stupid enough to take that steady gaze for acquiescence, especially when she said slowly, "I leave that to your judgment," and turned abruptly away.

In a few weeks the magazine came out with the poem. I still think that because of that contribution it represented the highest achievement of our adventure in creative writing. But she was there in the hall to greet me with, "You printed it!" Amazement and indignation were blazing upon her face. "I did not think it of you," she said simply but with a finality that was stabbing.

Before I could say much in my bewildered defense she told me that of course she would have to leave the school.

That gave me a chance to collect myself. "Wait," I said. "I do not comprehend a single thing you are telling me except your evident distress. But believe me when I tell you that it has no foundation whatever in any existing fact. Why, I remember now; you yourself agreed that I should print it! You said—" I searched my memory—"right on this spot you said, 'Use your own judgment.'"

"I thought you had judgment," was the reply I shall not easily forget. "But it is done, and I must go away."

"Go away for a few days if you wish." I tried to calm her. "And then let us see if what I predict will not happen. These powerful verses may have some source in your experience which you fancy is apparent to every reader. You think they give you away. Well, they simply do not. I have been reading them almost every day for weeks, and I have no notion of their personal application to you or to anyone else."

"You do not know?" She was incredulous.

"I know nothing except the marvelous impersonal story you tell us here on these pages. Don't you know that that is the way of all really fine art work? Personal suffering is often the source but the product itself is a thing of art, free from even the touch of its secret origin, a universal thing, and all the more precious because it was wrought out of blood and nerve. Go away for a day or so if you wish, but believe me when I tell you that you will find this whole community ready to welcome you back. You have achieved a supreme victory in the art we have all learned to love and respect."

To this day I do not know what the suppressions were that found their outlet in those remarkable lines; and I doubt if any reader has even thought to guess. She was soon reconciled to the belief that her secret, whatever it was, had been safely kept, for she watched my predictions come true and had the unique satisfaction of the maker of verses in seeing her work a loved thing in the hearts of others.

The line of communication opened by a sharing of the fruits of the creative life brings one into a storm area hidden serenely from the outside world. One gets to know, after a longish experience, to read some of the barometric signs: to know, for instance, that a smiling face may be a perfect mask of defense for defeat within, for despair even; that anger is not always the proof of indignation but of suppressed love, rather; that arrogant self-sufficiency may be woefully weak and timid within. One comes upon a child psychology that just never has been put in the books, where yawning may not be a sign of sleepiness at all but of alert and fearful anxiety (at the critical moment of a tight basketball game, for instance), where nonchalance may cover a crime and where blushing may be the outcome of innocence.

After a period spent in my room—the class had been singing original airs most lustily—my supervisor asked, "What subject of study *do* you teach, pray?" My answer, given jocosely at the time, is, I believe, the right one: "I teach no subject of study," I said; "I practice psychiatry." Perhaps I have been helped to my viewpoint about child life by the fact that for nearly two years, as military psychologist, I walked the psychiatric wards under the daily instruction of Arthur Herring.

Let me say swiftly, so as not to stress the matter to the point of alarm, that when one has come many times upon these concealed storms and has seen the occasional tragic outcome, or the determined attempt at tragedy, one learns to take with the utmost seriousness any disproportionate dramatization of life-affairs which is bringing suffering or distress to a child, and to count oneself lucky to have found out about it in time. Psychiatry here is of great help, for its first business is to gain the confidence of the sufferer by complete sympathy and understanding, then, slowly and adroitly, to show the relationship of the tiny causing incident to the whole of life, its place in the scheme of the common troubles of man, to belittle it, in short, and so take away its importance.

IV

The psychiatrist learns from cases as all good practitioners do. There is much to be discovered about the ways of life and living which is not yet down in the books! In everything that concerns human relations, from taxation to social welfare, we are coming down to cases. How children react and grow under given conditions is discovered, not by studying books, but by studying actual children. The book psychologist and the book sociologist are almost in the position of the physician who never had a patient—or whose patients have all died! Though he write a textbook on the learning process or on "the sociological reactions of the herd in preadolescent groups," to quote the title of an astonishing bit of recent nonsense, his word is not taken so seriously as in yesteryear.

The practice of education is something to be observed and recorded; and only long and fruitful experience in a genuine school environment may give one the skill to observe and record usefully. And the educational environment is changing so rapidly in these happy times that a five-year absence even —in, let us say, the business of administration—may unfit a person for understanding the wise observations and recordings of those who really know.

The sure sign of ignorance in this important matter—a notable defense reaction of the ignorant—is to announce, apropos of some exciting revelations of the new creative education, that one does not believe in permitting children to "do what they please." To those who know what is really happening in the newer practice of setting free creative powers, that remark is most disheartening. For just nothing can be done about it. The man who talks like that confesses that he does not know what is going on, what, indeed, has been going on in child education for twenty-five years or more; and furthermore he will never know. When he occupies a high and safe administrative post, it is torture, alas, and daily frustration for those who see the light but are condemned to work under him who so confidently walks in darkness. Oh, so confidently!

My prophecy is that our successes will come mainly through those who know cases, who do the work with children themselves, the authorities in the field, or through those who watch wisely and have eyes to see and minds to comprehend the educational significance of the work when it is well done.

V

Illustrative cases from my own notes beg for admittance here, but my difficulty is so to disguise the picture as to preserve the privacy of the individual.

A play was in rehearsal, just a fairy tale of a princess and her lords and ladies. It was moving along in stilted fashion, comically clumsy and awkward to those of us who were sitting in the darkened empty theater; but at one moment, in a procession about the throne, the bobbing clown swung to the front and delighted all by his pantomimic fooling.

The stupid rehearsal came alive for just that moment; everyone felt it, the few of us who were directing the performance and the players themselves; the latter, indeed, took on life immediately and really lived, for a flashing minute, in the stately and graceful years of Long Ago. The princess turned as she mounted the three steps of her throne and smiled, itself an illuminating thing. Motionless the clown bathed in that royal approval, then with a few swift steps, still droll and in character, he moved forward, bent the knee before her, and raised his face in loyal adoration.

In the few seconds of silence that followed I said quietly, "Boy, that was *fine!*"

The rehearsal went on. Nothing else happened save the dull, lifeless movement of players walking through parts and stating their unbelievable lines.

Nearly everyone had left when one of our group said, "There is someone over there in the dark on those benches, a boy, and he is sobbing his heart out." In a second I was there. It was the clown; but he fled at my approach. I followed him back stage and down a black stairway to the vault under the stage, the storehouse of props and theatric odds and ends. There I found him lying on a pile of discarded costumes and burlap rags, in the pitiful agony of unsuppressed weeping.

For a long time I stood over him in silence. Once I said, "Have it out, old fellow. Things like that we all have to get out of our systems somehow or other. I don't know why. But we all do it. You wouldn't believe it, maybe, but grown men go through it. Only they wouldn't own up. There are times when I have done the same thing. And not so long ago either. But I'd never admit it to anybody else. It comes sometimes when you are quite happy, too. Funny thing. I've gone off somewhere and cried my head off. Then I felt better. Everybody does it, I guess."

This is again the psychiatric approach. You confess to the same weakness yourself, and thereby prove that it is quite normal and to be expected. Nothing, you see, to be much alarmed about.

When the paroxysm began to die down I said musingly, as if talking to myself, "I've been wondering what caused it, and, by George, I think I've guessed it! Do you know yourself? Try to think. It often comes from the absurdest things. You tell me your guess and then I'll tell you mine. . . . I bet I've got it!"

After a quiet moment he said, "It was when you praised me."

"Right!" I cried. "That's just my guess, too! Now isn't that a funny one: If I'd gone for you hard you might expect something, but praise! Life is just the funniest thing that ever happened."

"That knocked me out," he said. "I'd 'a' been all right if it hadn't 'a' been for that."

Psychiatrists speak of this breaking up as the "crash."

Bad treatment may bring it on; in this instance it had come because of sudden and unexpected approval.

We managed to have a laugh or two as we sprawled together on that mound of smelly rags. He told me of misunderstandings, of the attempt to find his place, of a desire to be sporting and no whimperer, of failure. "They always choose me to be the clown," he said. "Elected unanimously. Always. . . . When I ask a question in class, they laugh. And then I laugh as if it *was* funny. When I propose something, or have an idea about anything, they laugh. And, of course, I act up then and pretend. I'm supposed to be a funny man. Sometimes they laugh when I get up to recite, before I've said anything. And I grin and play the fool, just—to fool them. Teachers send me from the room—for being funny!" He almost broke down again; and then came this astonishing and pathetic revelation, "*And I was never funny in my life!*"

Here was the supreme wit of the school, the keenly intelligent satirist, the lad with the swift ironic tongue; why, he had already made an enviable reputation; teachers and pupils alike admired him for his native qualities of humor. And in his own mind he had never been funny in his life! Every laugh had been a misinterpretation of his serious desire. They name him clown as an honor, and it nearly breaks his heart! His funny faces, his inimitable gestures, his devastating quips, all were bluff, a defense reaction purely! Unbelievable, but indubitably the fact.

We talked about that. And as we talked his old spirit came back. Again and again he started a laugh. "Boy," I said, "you *are* a funny man! You are the darnedest funniest man I've ever come across! You've got a great gift and don't know it! It's so easy for you, but you don't realize how rare it is in the world and how the world yearns for it. Don't despise it, for you have the great companion gifts, without which humor is just folly: you have seriousness and nimble intelligence. That pair, matched with humor, will win the world for you. I'll lay my little bet here, at any odds you choose, that it will be your serious intelligent wit that will open the hard doors of the world for you."

A problem might be set here for those who are desirous of learning the next step, clearly indicated in this case. Consider it, then, before I give the answer that worked. It was already tentatively formulated before our interview had ended.

It was to search carefully for some product of his that would not only be serious and intelligent but which would bring from others, particularly his own age-group, the reward of approval. In a little while it came, a quatrain of striking individuality. I pounced upon it with my praise and soon got others admiring. More came; and more; eventually a new reputation was made for him. Later I saw him a leader in the magazine group; the upper school had received him as an equal, the under school was giving him the deference due to acknowledged superiority. And *then* how his native humor bloomed!

VI

Another instance that gives us a touch of the mystery of the hidden creative life belongs again with that phenomenon of sudden awakening at night, a rapid writing, then peaceful sleep.

Helen had found a teacher to whom she could give freely and without fear the verses that from time to time had come to her in that difficult period between fifteen and sixteen. Without her knowledge I had seen them and had given secret counsel. Then came the midnight awakening and a product that startled us; for one must know that Helen's sister, just a year or two the elder, had recently died.

The teacher was at the time making a study of these cases of young high-school girls who had found release in the writing of confidential verses. So she noted carefully all the attending circumstances.

"Helen had suffered greatly at her sister's death," she told me. "They loved each other, without doubt. When she gave me the poem she whispered, 'Nothing came for weeks and then, last night, this! I got wide awake, more awake than in the daytime, and wrote—so easily!' "

The two talked about it, with the utmost sympathy, I know, but Helen was disturbed by the revelation of her own mind.

"That is not me!" she insisted at first. "I loved her and—was sorry! Oh, so sorry!"

But as they talked about it she admitted that always in the family the love had gone to the sister; and she had believed that that was right. They had loved her, too; but not the same. She never remembered having even a thought of envy or worry over the matter; but deep within she had always known it, or, more likely, imagined it. It was nothing. Surely the verses did not represent her real feeling. They had just come, from some source that imagined what was not true. "It is not me!" she insisted, and was grieved that she had written them.

The teacher and she faced the problem in many a long and satisfactory talk. After all, it might be a true picture. Why should not one face it? What we are is not of our own making; the myriad forces of life are acting upon us everlastingly, and we cannot deny our centuries of inheritance. It is not what we are but what we do with ourselves that counts. And we should never be afraid to confront what we really are, but fear only self-deception. To know is to be on guard.

Furthermore, the product of the artist bears often no relation to his own standards of living. The mild and sentimental Stevenson furnished us with stories of delectable horror, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, for instance. Perhaps the creative self out of curiosity plays with its opposite; one should not be so sure that its revelations are always *us*. These and similar themes were discussed until all the anguish of personal guiltiness had vanished.

Another proof was easily brought to her. The source of a work of art may be known to the creator, but the product itself may be entirely free of the suggestion of taint. The verses were read to others, nothing being said of the circumstances; and it was most heartening to learn that they were accepted solely for their power. No one was ever aware of a personal significance; some even accepted them as an allegory, and named in their own lives the influences, freed from all morbid suggestion, which it related so truly. It might, indeed, be the story of old love, gone long ago and now smiled at with sympathetic understanding of its comical place in the scheme of better things; or a sacrifice of self-interest that one made easily; or the temptation to less honorable ways which one knows will always be resisted; and so on endlessly.

Of course one must know that Helen was a well-read young woman and that she had an unusual command of language. Here are the verses:

DREAMS

I thought that I had buried her
  So deeply, deeply underground
That her dead body would not stir,
  Nor her stopped mouth make fluttering sound:

And then I flourished like a tree;
  New leaves of grace began to show,
And all my friends rejoiced that I
  Could have, at last, my chance to grow;

But what they could not see or know
  Was that the fiery sap which fed
My brilliant daily strength would go
  At night down to its old dark bed.

Thus, sensitive in sleep, I found
  That on occasions I would feel
In that unconscious underground
  A palpable, direct appeal.

In an environment that suits
  A readjusted buried soul
She keeps on tugging at my roots
  Like an unkind, aggressive mole.

Flashes of perfect thinking we have had in abundance from the deeper sources of the creative life, but this illustration of prolonged effort that meets no obstruction, moving swiftly and easily toward a complete design, one unforseen by the author, one, indeed, that comes as a surprise and a shock, this is less common. Writing men and women, however, constantly tell me that this is just the way their best work is often done. They match Helen's story with dozens of their own. For days and nights, at times, the steady flow goes on, as if directed by some powerful, superior spirit. The final result is often a surprise to the writer and a revelation of unguessed personal qualities.

It is important, of course, to know all the possibilities of the creative life. Helen's lugubrious picture reminds us that this perfect inward spirit often speaks to us in single words, phrases, ideas. It is best to know this and to be watchful for its gifts. As this is not a mystical matter but a practical one and easily proved, we teach youth to be ready with pencil and notebook. The Demon of Inhibition drowses and takes a nap; the nimble Spirit calls then to us; the Demon awakes with a growl that frightens all memory away unless we are quick to record the magic words. So the knowledge that, as in Helen's case, the Spirit may at times speak to us steadily and without interruption is worthy and useful.

Some fine persons, however, are sure to be shocked at the revelation we have given here; they may even use Helen's verses against us in argument. Again we remind the reader that it is better that a youth have such confidence in us that he will expose even the worst side of his secret and private life. In no other way shall we have the knowledge upon which to base helpful guidance. The older theory demanded concealment; it did not uncover symptoms, and, for that very reason, it could not possibly undertake the slow development that leads out of the temporary danger and into mental and spiritual health.

Chapter IX

THE DEMON OF INHIBITION

Poetry had broken loose in Caroline Zachry's junior high-school classes. It was something more than a classroom assignment guided by a successful teacher; it was a spontaneous and genuine poetic outburst which really seized the interest of everyone. Of course Miss Zachry had laid the long train whose premeditated outcome was this very general explosion.* The poetry crop had suddenly burst into bloom; a mimeographed magazine appeared; business managers and editors assumed command. Every member of the junior high school seemed suddenly bitten with the virus of serious poetic composition.

Almost every member. One keen lad remained aloof. With detached humor, noting the excitement about him, he scribbled the first nonsense that came into his head, copied it carefully and presented it to the youthful editors. To his secret glee they read it and accepted it with enormous seriousness, and the lad went off to have his private laugh.

We learned the details later, so that I should not omit the fact that he had worked a long while over his first rough draft, twisting and turning it this way and that to bring out its delicious silliness; it was really in his mind for several days before he was ready to let it go as a perfected hoax.

On the day the mimeographed magazine came out he watched the absorbed readers. The joke would be on the self-consequential editors this time. In a moment or two, he thought, someone would read his stuff, look up, and laugh.

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*For a full account of which one should secure her *Illustrations of English Work in the Junior High School*, Teachers College Publications, New York City, to which William H. Kilpatrick has contributed a commanding introduction.

They read, but they did not laugh. They read and they looked over at him, but their glances and their clatter of speech were all of approval for the fine poem he had written! "One of the best things the class has done," was the general verdict. And the teacher agreed with them!

Again he had his private laugh. The joke was now on all of them. Including Miss Zachry. Why, he had scribbled away with hardly a thought in his mind. Poetry! They didn't know the difference between poetry and hash. This whole poetry craze was pure bunk. Oh, listen to them gush! (We heard all these arguments from him later.) He "had" them and he could prove it now (I believe he had admitted one boy into the conspiracy to use as a witness); but their excited admiration of his work was too serious to give him an immediate chance. In fact, they took his first protestations as just silly modesty and shut him up.

He read the so-called poem over to himself. He could hardly conceal his desire to laugh in their faces. It had practically no meaning at all! But as the days went by he had to listen to parts that began to be quoted on all sides, lines that readers had relished and must say aloud over and over. One phrase in particular gave great satisfaction; it was repeated openly in the halls as the class skipped along and it was whispered secretly in many a recitation room:

Tum . . . tum . . . tum . . .
On the back of a hollow bamboo drum.

The poem tells the story of Akib, King of Egypt's son, who

Lay by the river Do Dum Dun,
Lay on the gray-green sands
Of Egypt land,
On Egypt's gray-green sand.

As he lazily stretched himself out beneath the oily palm, Akib hummed

. . . a song to the Ukeadahm
Till he fell asleep, in the middle of June,
Singing away to the crocodile's tune,
To the tune of the ugly crocodile,
As it beat its tail in the river Nile,
Tum . . . tum . . . tum . . .
On the back of a hollow bamboo drum.

Then follows Akib's dream of the Ukeadahm coming "with stealthy steps and cautious looks, washing his face in the cool of the brooks," . . . "crushing the soil and mashing the sod"

As he sifted the grains through his hoof-like hand,
Sifting the grains
To the wind that blew over Egypt land.

And Akib, the sleeping King of Egypt's son, dreamed that the moon broke out in the sky above

. . . and tossed about
Like a ship on the sea in the trough of the storm,
Fighting the waves as the night went on;
And he saw the moon shiver at the crocodile
As it thumped its tail in the river Nile,
Tum . . . tum . . . tum . . .
On the back of a hollow bamboo drum.

Those who are interested enough to follow the mysteriously uncanny story may find the whole poem in *Creative Youth.* It has taken the fancy of many other boys and girls; they see in it the free play of an astonishingly vivid imagination. That it was done rapidly and without much planning has nothing to do with its value; and that its author thought it worth little is only one more proof that our best work is often not appreciated by ourselves.

The real fun of the episode came when the Seniors, looking for material for their printed magazine, fell upon *Akib, King of Egypt's Son,* in the mimeographed periodical and gave it two full pages with their hearty endorsement. Now, thought the young author, the laugh is on the whole school; and it was then that he came out with his own story and his statement that they were all fooled.

As Sam was able to convince several others, something like the start of a revolt had burst amid that poetry group. A real fight was on, no doubt. If someone had come along at that moment and proposed a discussion of What is poetry anyway? it would have met with unanimous interest. Intense moments of that sort were characteristic of the atmosphere in Miss Zachry's literary projects. At times nothing in the world seemed to those children of greater importance than the differences of opinion that cropped up naturally out of her work; she is a master in the art of planting materials that seize the whole life of the child. But here she was somewhat fearful that the excitement might become too hot to handle for the right progress of that group along creative lines; so we went into private conference on ways and means of meeting the difficulty to make it tell for the good of all.

In consequence, I was invited to go before the class with my side of the story, in order to prove to that youngster that he had really, if unwittingly, done a superior thing. I read the poem to the eager young people and then explained why we older persons believed that it was one of the outstanding accomplishments of the younger poetry group. It was most amusing to think, as we debated back and forth, that here were two teachers seeking to convince a student that he had done well in his school work and practically begging him to take a high grade for it! A striking picture out of the new education.

After the reading, a steady and continuous applause came spontaneously from the youngsters, obviously meant for the young author.

I smiled at the youth as the applause continued solemnly. "Doesn't that affect you," I asked him quietly, "their approval?"

He was slumped low in his chair, one elbow on the table in front of him. "Yes," he admitted honestly. "It does. They like it, I guess. You read it—as if it had some sense. But—it hasn't any; no meaning, I mean."

"I agree with you," said I. "But we don't always like a poem for its meaning. The fascinating thing about *Akib* is its pictures. It is a procession of weird, even grisly pictures. That ugly crocodile! It gives me the shivers. And continues to, long after I have read it. I see him at night

"Tum . . . tum . . . tum . . .
On the back of a hollow bamboo drum!

Just like *The Ancient Mariner.* I doubt if anybody really knows what *The Ancient Mariner* means; I am one of those who believe that even Coleridge, the author, didn't know! But his pictures are enough to give a body delightful and permanent horrors."

Suddenly a large girl rose near him and said, "Sam, you *know* it's good!" and slumped with a bang into her chair. The class applauded again; and that seemed to settle the matter.

II

There is no doubt that something has a grip on our real self. Something there is that does not love our best. Every artist—painter, writer, or fabricator generally—knows about this unseen, unknown enemy; and every artist has at some time or other discovered a trick to throw it off that seemingly eternal guard. Some will smoke endless pipes and pretend to be thinking about nothing at all; and then, presto! they turn suddenly to work and have a lot done before the Thing (who is really a little stupid) can discover what's up. Others walk up and down; or must use a rocking chair; some find places of magic where he cannot always enter—bathtubs, for instance; and there are those who must work in bed (Mark Twain was one of these); or go hiking, or, like Mary Roberts Rinehart, take an office in town away from any suggestion of normal living.

Hours are important, too. Some cannot work until after midnight. Others begin at dawn.

The experience of those who awaken suddenly at night and find nothing to interfere with almost perfect self-expression has already been put before us; Sam's *Akib, King of Egypt's Son*, is, I believe, just another instance of an unconscious scheme to divert the creative inhibitions. He thought he was only fooling, but he succeeded in fooling himself. If he had seriously attempted to write, the chances are that he would have had to struggle, and then, in all likelihood, his free-flowing imaginative pictures would not have been forthcoming at all. Not to try is one of the ways of succeeding in the creative field. It is not the only way, of course.

Not to try! How the creative life fights all the precepts of the virtuous ones! The good little boy is one who gets up at an exact hour, does always what he is told, listens to others, and disregards any promptings of thinking that might suggest themselves from within, strives all the time to do his best, never loafs, eats his meals on time, including two hundred calories of spinach, never speaks unless spoken to, assumes an interest in everything worthy, prepares all his lessons with exactly equal interest in each, and goes to bed on the dot without a single original human whine.

The picture suggests clockwork. Well, we elders have tried our best, for our own comfort largely, to arrange a world with only this sort of youth in it; but our success, if any, was only with the uncreative; our failures were with those self-assertive rebels struggling to be free spirits. My own belief is that we should not have failed if we had had a better understanding of their unclock-like make-up.

The aim of this book is to help in that understanding, although it is written in the assurance that many will not think that any of our fine distinctions are important. But it is just through the attention to distinctions of the sort we are recording here that humanity has made its progress. We used to duck poor old trembling women and beat the terrified feeble-minded.

III

My belief is that our serious consideration of Sam's creative ability brought to him a practical knowledge of the workings of his own mind. If that is true then it was one of the best pieces of teaching that the school did for him. We noted that he wrote a considerable amount of material, very little of which he permitted us to see; undoubtedly he got a deal of personal satisfaction out of these scribbling reproductions of the figures in his mind.

Religious experiences absorbed him at one later period; not that he said anything about it; we learned it from others. He wrote a great deal at that time. Obviously the stark reality of Judgment Day had worked upon his imagination, for among the very few contributions that he permitted to circulate was one on that theme. I give it in these pages to show that we were not wrong in attributing to him a strikingly imaginative personality with a gift for condensed and pictured language:

THE COMING OF THE LORD

I

The clouds broke forth
In a mighty ray
Lighting the glory
Of the new-come day.
Angels chanted
And people cheered,
The cattle ran
And the horses reared.
All was havoc
In hell-like fire,
And the old cross glowed
On the steeple spire,
While all around
Grew fiery red
With sparks and lightning
And thunder dread.

II

Christ stepped out
On a crimson cloud
Amidst a roaring
Shouting crowd,
With an ivory crown
And a love-worn face
And a bleeding heart
Of flowing grace.

III

The Devil peeked out
Of a corner cloud
And grinned at the Lord
And mockingly bowed.
And the people yelled
Like a braying bull:
"Begone, you devil!
You goat-horned fool!
Begone to your hell,
Your brimstone and fire!"
And the old cross glowed
On the steeple spire.

IV

Then rich men rushed
To their hidden wealth,
And drunkards drank
To the foul fiend's health.
Some were afraid
And tore their hair,
Doing penance for sin
While full unaware
How beside the cot
Of each good man,
An angel played
On the pipes of Pan.

V

Of a sudden the saints
In double pairs
Came riding forth
On brown-gray mares.
Onward, forward,
All day they marched
O'er the burnt-up earth
Forever parched.
Up the golden ladder!
Through the golden gate!
Others followed after
But were too late.

VI

The earth shriveled up,
Went hurling through space. . . .
The Lord had come and gone in His grace.

IV

How may one doubt that the above effort was performed under the stress of genuine moral feeling? Well, certain stern moralists do doubt. When we permit children to think, they cry anathema upon us and blame us for all the evil in the world. Then they give us a sample of their own type of thinking on the subject of education, and while they protest that they are most modern, they seem unaware that they are opening themselves to the suspicion of what the psychiatrist calls regression.

Defeated by the present, regression turns against it and defends a past that had always been hated. There is a regression period for each of us, perhaps, so one cannot afford to be uncharitable: old age exhibits it, present frustration will bring it on at any age, all introverts that have been denied leadership find eventual solace in regression.

The most dangerous socially among the regressives are old leaders of new thought who have been defeated by newer thought or by the crowding forward of younger leaders. The old cheering crowds have gone, but a new cheering crowd may be summoned instantly. How? By shifting to the conservative stand of the ignorant. To start that roar of acclaim the regressive has only to say—as they do—"What this younger generation needs is a good old-fashioned strapping to put the fear of God into their bodies!" A gathering of intelligent mothers, however, would greet that declamation with silence. They would be aware that no help can come from such an undiscriminating generalization, but much harm, for it will fortify the stupid and arm the cruel.

To keep the respect of the intelligent minority the regressives protest that they are not regressive; but an analysis of their proposed school program shows it to be simply a hark-back to their own admittedly hated school regimen. Here is a sample. Look at it and judge: one course of study for all, because we shall cease to be Americans, they rationalize, unless our school-possessions are exactly alike; a hard course at that, because one's pedagogy must not be "soft"; jammed with facts to be committed to memory, because the world is lost, they reason, unless each child knows (verbally!) all that ever happened in the world; shot with memoriter work upon—this seems incredible!—moral copy-book slogans; and—well, of course!—backed by the whip.

To them the business of education is not to save a child but to stuff him.

Morality is their rationalizing excuse—as, alas, it is for the plea of all despots—and the horror of "youth gone wrong" is swung before us. Of course youth has not gone wrong at all; youth was never so fine and idealistic and worthy of our best. It is simply bad observing and bad thinking to condemn all for the serious situation of a few. During those awful months of the Loeb-Leopold trial all really worthy young persons were made to suffer by these same moral crusaders, whose attitude illustrates the iceberg fallacy of regarding only the one-tenth above and ignoring the nine-tenths under the sea.

A true regressive is an honest man, however; he has no notion of the psychical explanation of his state; he fights the new with sincerity and with clear conviction. Authors of textbooks made to fit the old pedagogy are equally honest in their oratorical outbursts against the new; they seem really unaware that they are fighting primarily to protect their personal property. Always, I note, they, too, appear as moral crusaders. In either case the psychical phenomenon is most interesting: the complete self-deception, the strong element of self-interest, the invariable concealment behind the protecting rampart of righteousness. A volume could be written on the story of the antagonism of the textbook writers to every forward movement in child education. They do often obstruct the way to fruitful progress, but only temporarily. One should meet them, therefore, not with attack but with sympathetic understanding. In 1860 we should not have expected a defense of those immoral Abolitionists from a chap who had just published a good selling work entitled "How to Get the Most out of the Black Man"!

Chapter X

THE NATIVES AND THE RHYMESTERS

We have suggested before that the native language of little children is often stilled by the adult naïve belief that all verse should rhyme. I find it a dangerous subject, so must proceed with care. Older persons flare up when I speak in public on this important phase of the emergence of the creative life. A Western editor flayed me as one opposed to *Mother Goose*, which, of course, I am not, for it is one of my permanent delights, and followed it up with the presumption that I must surely be a paid propagandist of the Infra Reds.

When the confidential links are made with very little children they may speak out of their heart in their native language. Rarely have I found this speech of theirs to be other than fine. Call it prose or poetry, the classification does not matter at all, it has a rhythmic cadence, a sense for the right word, and an uncanny right placing of that right word for just the emphasis intended; and yet it rarely ever rhymes. To me, and to many others, this language is too worthy to be neglected; we feel that it should be encouraged, brought out, allowed to grow in strength, beauty, and power.

We are beginning now to have records of this untutored speech. Mothers and teachers are recording it; and perhaps our ear is being trained to catch its subtle beauty. Again we must give credit to Hilda and her mother, who preserved for us her native notes in *Poems by a Little Girl* and *Shoes of the Wind*. Those marvelously sure words of Hilda, one remembers, were for years taken down by Mrs. Conkling; so we see before us the casual utterance of a little girl who spoke in her own natural language; but the effect upon us is simply the mysterious reaction that stirs us in the presence of the equally mysterious thing we call art. She hardly ever touches rhyme. In reading Hilda, however, no one, not even an academician, thinks to question if it is poetry.

Hilda grew in skilfulness; the chance to practice her art without fear, and without even the thought that it was an art, and the ever-listening ear of the loved mother, this was environment enough. Surely her work belongs with the best poetry of these two decades of remarkable writing in America.

All of her work has authentic beauty, and some of it, written toward her tenth year, has inexplicable child-wisdom and, at times, almost prophetic insight. One of her poems makes such a profound impression that mothers can hardly read it through without tears, for it tells, all unknowingly, to be sure, of the inevitable time when the little girl-child will grow up and go away. Some of us have suffered that poignant experience, and lucky are we, following Hilda's beautiful picture, if she comes back to us, with a pine cone in her pocket and the pink sand, as of old, between her fingers, comes back to her own again to tell us of a "golden pheasant's feather," while the mother once more sings the old songs that lull her to contented sleep:

I SHALL COME BACK

I shall be coming back to you
From seas, rivers, sunny meadows, glens that hold secrets:
I shall come back with my hands full
Of light and flowers.
Brooks braided in with sunbeams
Will hang from my fingers.
My heart will be awake. . . .
All my thoughts and joys will go to you.
I shall bring back things I have picked up
Traveling this road or the other,
Things found by the sea or in the pine-wood.
There will be a pine-cone in my pocket,
Grains of pink sand between my fingers.
I shall tell you of a golden pheasant's feather;
I shall tell you of stars like seaweed.
Moons will glitter in my hair. . . .

Will you know me?
I shall come back when sunset has turned away and gone,
And you will untangle the moons
And make me drowsy
And put me to bed.

Another mother takes down the words of her five-year-old daughter, again it is at the sleepy hour, and we have sympathetic understanding of the weariness of a child after a long day of play. We take her in our arms, for the little legs will no longer support the tired body, and the little arms hang drooping at the sides. Out of her own life she brings us images, of the permanent heavens, of the enduring stones, and of the sounds of the earth things at night and the look of the world at morning. She says,

I'm tired:
Tired as the lazy stones
That are always sitting down;
Most tired as the sky
That stays up all night and day,
Whether it's early with spider-vines
Or late with frogs singing.

This and others of the type are published in Mabel Mountsier's remarkable collection, *Singing Youth.* I have so many similar examples as to make me sure of my ground; there is a beautiful language which children already possess but which we commonly ignore. A youngster has come upon the myth of Pegasus and writes her personal love and understanding:

PEGASUS

Roaming over valley and dale
Never was such a winged steed
As Pegasus the dear of my heart,
Drinking from the fountains clear
Then spreading his wings
For a flight through the fleecy clouds

And the blue sky
Like a great white bird.

No master has he, no whip, no spur,
For he is free.

A boy in the third grade talks soberly of his father, who had come from work so weary one night that he went straight to bed without even waiting for his supper. It seemed to bother the boy greatly. After thinking a long time he said slowly to his teacher:

I saw a man go walking;
He walked *far* away;
When he came home
He was *so* tired!
So *tired!*
To bed went he,
To bed . . . to bed.

From his Ten Year Group in the City and Country School William Mann Fink gives me:

I'd like to be up in Nelson's silo
With the pipe running
And the damp corn getting down my back
And floating to my feet.

As a Christams present Caroline Pratt sends me *The Orator*, for she knew I would prize it. Here is intelligent youth, age thirteen, staring at the grotesquery of man—or is it cunning?—in his absurdest moment, the time of the great elections. The poem has subtile qualities which one may sense by varying the interpretation of the final lines of the stanzas. The first one I read as a simple interrogation; the second, with the suggestion that the orator is a clever, smart rascal who knows exactly what he is about, for it is the mob, including you and me, and not the orator who is "crazy":

THE ORATOR

He stands aloft the crowd
And shouts and bites;
His harsh voice cuts the air
As he shouts out in defiance.
The mob nods its head;
The Orator sweats;
He's a mess. He must be crazy!
Is he?

One hour, two hours, his arms wave wildly;
His eyes glare. . . .
The mob moves slowly, slowly off.
The Orator sweats. He's a mess.
He *must* be crazy!
Is he?

Often our finds in verse are too personal for general circulation; and this brings to us a knowledge of a more or less rare art-form, art for its own sake literally, written solely for the private satisfactions of the creator. One such poem I have before me, dear because of reasons that may not be spoken of here, whose whole meaning can never be clear now but whose strange beauty is altogether real:

I HEAR

I stand alone;
I stand alone, well aware
Of the step, step, step
Of my mind.

I hear—
You cannot make me deaf
To the drum of the treble clef—
I hear my mind.

I prayed and I am praying,
But you shall never know
My mind.

Mary Ann, age eleven, gives us a fine array of summer evening sounds in the country:

COW BELLS

Far, far away, down in the valley
I hear a cow bell jingling.
As it comes nearer, a cow calls for her calf.
A shrill bark fills the air;
Then a low voice calls,
"Come, boss! Come, boss!"

Out of strong feeling will often come words of astonishing effect. A teacher writes me, "My classes were asked by the superintendent to write some Christmas poems or stories for the local paper. The girl who wrote *The Nativity*, which I'm giving you, had recently lost her mother. She was so heartbroken that I had asked her to spend some time with me. One night she waked me and said, 'The only line I can think of for Christmas poetry is "Myrrh for the dead."' I consoled her and begged her to go back to sleep and forget the poetry. The next day she brought these verses to my desk. No one else will guess the emotional power they really express."

They begin in rhyme, impersonal and conventional; then in the last part, which I give here, she turns to her own unrhymed speech and, with remarkable repression of all personal reference, pours forth her grief:

In Bethelem upon the straw
A King is born,
And wise men from the East
Have brought him gifts—
Gold, frankincense, and myrrh—
Gold, for the king;
Incense, for the priest;
And myrrh, for the dead
Myrrh, for the dead!

The Christ Child smiles,
For over Him the shadow of the Cross
Has not yet come.

It is upon this sure gift of a native language that we must work sympathetically if we hope to call forth eventually that superior literary output which here and there we are noting in special groups of children. The cry of "genius" or of "selected children" will no longer do; the possibilities are great among any shy young persons who can talk. But a warning must be given. The native language is used at first for purely personal needs. Hardly any of the illustrations above, with the exception, of course, of Hilda's, is worthy in the sense of conveying to everyone the charged emotions of the author. One must know, in one instance, of the weary father; without the knowledge of the hidden grief, so well concealed in *The Nativity*, a reader might not be so supremely touched. The point is to accept them and know their personal value on the long journey toward mastery of the medium of words.

Here are three quite varying types* written in a public-school system which, from the lowest grade to the very top, has a fine regard for native notes:

GRANDMOTHER

Some old people
Are like potatoes:
Mealy,
And with eyes that do not see.

My grandmother
Is like an apple:
With all the joy
Of the autumn of life.

Grade XII.

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*From *Creative Activities*, Bulletin No. 9; 30 cents postpaid. Willard W. Beatty, Superintendent, Bronxville, N. Y.

RAINY NIGHTS

Rain comes steadily down;
  The streets are all ashine;
A limousine glides past
  Making a whirring, purring
Sound on the wet bricks.
  Two high school girls
With name-besmeared slickers
  Are crossing the street
When a butcher's Ford
  Rattles past
And splashes the girls
  Who giggle uproariously.
Grade X.

VESPERS

Slim tapers tipped starlike
In the dusk
Beneath the stained glass window
Pointing arches—
Dim.

My soul with soft music
Quivering;
My heart groping
In the twilight—
Unquiet.
Grade XII.

The discussion here is always of self-expression as a means of growth, and not of poetry; nor even of poets or of literature. To use the delicate tone of rhyme as an unremembered part of the music of words and at the same time to maintain the essential projection of sincere feeling, that—who would doubt it?—is altogether worthy; but mere rhyming will not reach that goal. Nor are we concerned here with attaining even that end. The business of making professional poets is still another matter—with which this writer has never had the least interest; he is presenting here his objection to the convention of rhyme when it is used with children as a block to the best expression of the spirit.

In the following stanza* a young printer celebrates the return of a friend in a passionate outburst that reaches the reader without the loss of a single vibration; I feel quite sure that in his case an attempt to rhyme would have simply moved him into an artificial region of posing insincerities:

WHEN YOU CAME

When you came, my friend,
When you came back home,
I was filled with excited joy.
My pulse beat fast. As my press ran on in the shop
I turned on the full power and the machine kept pace with my mind.
All saw and cried,
"Where is the fire, there!
Where is the fire!"
And I yelled out, as a fruit peddler on the street,
"In my heart, you devils!
In my heart!"

II

One lad we deprived of the opportunity to stay with the freer creative group because his shortcomings on the mechanistic side of language made it seem too dangerous for experimentation. He begged us to let him work in the free periods with the others and offered bits of things that he had done in private, but we placed him for a large part of the time in a special class which rigorously kept to the drills and tests common in most schools. We did not know enough then to take the risk with him.

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*From *Preludes to Poetry*, a unique experiment in library activities that comes out of the Stevenson Room of the Cleveland Public Library, Cleveland, Ohio.

At the start, however, I was convinced that he had most promising latent power in the language arts, that he already knew how to use it, and that, eventually, he would make his place in the world through a superior mastery of his gift of words. I am soberly iterating now the prophetic judgment made many years ago. We shall see!

We talked much together. I sensed a persistent urge to write and a determined will to succeed. That is only a part of my proof; I felt the pulse of something living within him that will not be denied. Another part of the proof—it is only a part—I am willing to give here by presenting a sample of his language skill while in the ninth grade. It is not offered as anything excellent in itself, but it will serve, for the benefit of those who are desirous of knowing what it is we creative educationists are forever talking about, as one more example of the type of native language illustrated in this chapter:

TROUBLE ABOVE

No one understands the job that poor old
Saint Peter has.
Yet, we all worry what will happen
When we get there—
If we do.

. . . .

Apparently some did get there,
Because the other day the crowd
Rushed in from the Heavenly Playground,
With a rustling of silk, and a stench of tobacco,
And swamped poor gray Pete.
They demanded to know
Why that humble, unshaved Carpenter
Had been allowed to enter
When *they* were there.

And Peter, for once, waxed hot,
And swore that all who had complained
Should be thrust out of the gates
And thrown to Hell.

Immediately there was a weeping
And crying for mercy.

However, down they were flung;
All except two,
The unshaved Carpenter—and I
Who hid under the Judgment Table.

Most older persons, I fancy, would miss the significance of the line, "With a rustling of silk, and a stench of tobacco," and every academician among them would condemn "stench" as inappropriate in Heaven. However, that is just the picture, and the odor, of our best society, from the point of view, or, rather, from the point of smell, of a clean small boy who does not smoke.

One of our lads was suddenly stricken with an illness for which there was then but slender hope for cure, but while we were helplessly bereft, he continuously shamed us by bearing his fate with a high heart and even with humor. During those weeks of anxious waiting he gave me large quantities of material. He still lives and holds a high place among the science scholars, but one may understand why I did not publish at the time this jaunty song:

I WONDER

My mind is like a bird, a bird,
Oh, my mind is like a bird
  With a rancey tancey toy!

The world is like a cage, a cage,
Oh, the world is like a cage
  With a rancey tancey toy!

It holds me tight, holds me tight,
Oh, it holds me tight
  With a rancey tancey toy!

But it cannot hold my mind, my mind,
Oh, it cannot hold my mind
With a rancey tancey toy!

My mind soars through the sunset clouds, sunset clouds,
Oh, my mind soars through the sunset clouds
With a rancey tancey toy!

But I am fast to the world, the world,
Oh, I am fast to the world
With a rancey tancey toy!

If my mind were too, what should I do? should I do?
Oh, if my mind were too, what should I do?
With a rancey tancey toy!

Science has been his field since anyone can remember. Quietly he has given the most of his life to it and, therefore, it would be the topic of much of his rhyming play with words. Even when his own span was threatened he could jest sportingly of the fossil evidences of the mortality of the greatest:

TYRANNOSAURUS REX

King of the tyrant reptiles, who measured forty-seven feet long from nose to tail, who stood twenty feet high in his bare feet, whose teeth were six inches long, and who was the largest carnivora that ever cursed the earth, speaks:

I was a great grey Dinosaur
My jaws were caked with mud and gore
And I weighed one hundred tons or more.

Over this world I once held sway
And I dressed in no purple mantle gay
But only a pimply hide of grey.

The only kind of food I'd seek
Was meat that had rotted for a week
And had a truly lovely reek.

Ah! That was the day, and that the hour!
I ruled the earth with jaw and power
With plenty of rancid flesh to devour.

But the little mammals, quick and fleet,
Whose forms were small, whose flesh was sweet,
Who raced and slithered in the peat,

They mocked at me where'er I came;
They gnawed my toes till I was lame,
And so they put me out of the game.

So my remains repose in pomp
In this museum and never romp
After Iguanodons in the swamp;

While the little mammals come to see
The fossil bones that once were me,
And giggle and point in puny glee.

III

Muriel is now fourteen, but she has the touch of the sure artist in expressing the thought and feeling of her unique personality. Her reading has been wide and varied, but it has only strengthened the marked individual note; throughout her young life she has retained the native unrhymed language, adding grace and range with the years. She fell into the hands of no teacher of ancient prosody, presumably; or, what is more likely, her instinctive good taste and self-regard were so satisfying that no mere master of jingle could win even her attention.

Her work, I like to think, is a promise of what might be the wonder-working possession of many a youth were the surrounding influences of home and school more appreciative of the language forms she has so successfully developed as her own. Of the many and varied expressions of her personality I select for illustration here her *November Days and Nights:*

NOVEMBER DAYS AND NIGHTS

I

The brown, dead leaves
Are a flock of birds that hover listlessly
Above the city. A flock of swallows
Wheeling and pirouetting
In an antique dance. . . .
A brown, torn garment
On the grey, still city.

II

The thin, black fingers of the ash-tree
Are combing the wind in her bereavement.
The ash-tree is a dark, lone widow
Searching the winds for
Her husband, the Spring.
Searching the winds with tremulous fingers,
And mourning in loneliness.

III

Come back to us, little grey sister,
Grey ghost of the birch-tree,
Come back to us,
Your elderly relations.
We are prim old great-aunts,
We the pine-trees;
And bearded uncles,
We the old oak-trees.
Your little brothers, the maples,
Weep for you.
Come back to us, little grey sister,
Pale little ghost of the birch-tree.

IV

There was frost on my window
This morning. A delicate stencil
Of silvery patterns
Of deep-drooping willows,

And heavy, fantastic ferns
That were scattered over the sill.
An age-honored sign of the Winter,
An infallible omen of Winter.

V

The moon is not a crescent
As in September (it shone above the rose-bush),
Nor a great globe of false sunlight
As in mid-July.
It is only a half-moon,
Half-moon of November,
High over the City,
Waiting for Winter.

VI

The wind is an insolent braggart
That is hushed for an instant
In touching with arrogant lips the dead face
Of his mother, the Earth,
And whispering sadly the old, old promise
Of resurrection.
He has just come from kissing
The white shoulders of mountains,
Yet laughing, and vowing
With a smile on his lips
The same promise of Springtime.
It is strange mockery that he should enter
The dark death-chamber
After revelry such as his.

VII

No pagan gods are dancing in these fields,
But the wraith of Autumn
And the breath of Winter
Have made a rendezvous in the orchard.
The fields
Are barren, and the young acacia-tree
Is numbed and frozen by the laugh of Death.
No pagan gods are dancing in November.

VIII

These things are the heart of Autumn:
The fading of day,
The mourning of all Nature,
A lighted window in the darkness,
And the laughter of heedless children
In the grey stone streets,
After the flowers have withered.

IV

Now rhyme does not invariably enter into this native region. If teachers and mothers did not work so hard to annihilate everything else but rhyme, the more natural and better language might have a chance to develop. To most teachers of young children, to write a poem means to indite a jingle. Without knowing it they step in at the start to block free expression.

In a marvelously liberal school system of the Middle West I sat beside a child who was clearly composing a poem. In that setting it was the natural thing to do, but she had used the word *trees* and therefore was compelled to toss her little thought aside and end her poem with something quite alien about things that *freeze*. Fancy being forced to write one's most intimate letters in doggerel verse!

In the same building, however, I found a teacher of the upper elementary grades who, by means of an after-school Writing Club, was receiving an outpouring in the native language. We spent an hour or more going over these very private materials. To print any of it here would be to tell only a very small part of the personal story, showing again that the hunger for expression is always a revelation of deep and urgent needs.

A little girl, for instance, who had not quite succeeded in many things she had tried to do—they were secret tries and equally secret failures—had been depressed for a long time. So she sought the only peace she could obtain; she gave up trying and flowed with the drift of the world. At that time she had sat for a full hour in silent meditation and then she wrote:

A THOUGHT

I have wandered.
Yet will I no longer wander,
For within my mother's garden
I have found shelter.

This is quite unlike anything else she had written during the year. We went over all of her other work; it was ordinary and inexpressive. Sometimes the spirit seems a prisoner in a deep dungeon calling for help, but no sound is heard, only a shout when a door far below is opened and shut.

Chapter XI

OTHER RHYMINGS

THE sprightly surety with which first-grade teachers all over this land gather the new youngsters about them to give a lesson in what they call poetry makes me guess that not instinct, nor originality, nor knowledge of children is the source of those suspiciously standardized "lessons." These fine young teachers are only the retailers, not the manufacturers; one must look to certain training schools for teachers, I suspect, where nimble devices are placed above everything else in the teachers' equipment.

At the risk of hurting the sensitive reader I must give a sample of the results of one of these lessons; it is almost exactly like the output in the hundreds of other cases that I have collected. Such nice, young, healthy, lovely teachers they are who give them to me with a beaming, "I *know* you will love to see what we are doing in poetry with the first grade!" And this is what I see:

POEMS BY THE FIRST GRADE

I had a bat
Who lived in a hat
With a rat
Henry J.

I have a ball
Who danced on the wall
Elizabeth R.

A little mouse
Had a tin house
Louise T.

There was an ox
Bumped into a box
Robert T.

I went to sleep
Said a little sheep
Stanley S.

I came to a tree
It fell on me
Rosy V.

I had a little hog
He danced on a log
He fell off in a bog
And hit a dog
Noel S.

I have a car
It goes far
Joseph G.

I have cat
Her name is Pat
Jane T.

There was a man
He jumped in a pan
Flora D.

There was a potato
He kissed a tomato
Gladys C.

I had a pig
He ate a fig
And did a jig
Harold E.

Rhyme is a great invention. I am in favor of it, at the proper time. But rhyming is not all of poetry. Neither is it simply a coincidence of sounds; it is a higher art than that. Children who wish to use it should know more about it. At best, in the upper grades, they are given lessons on the usual classification system, monometer, dimeter, trimeter, and the rest; and models of verse forms—"triolets, villanells, rondels, rondeaus"—are presented for imitation. Rhymed versification cannot learn much by this sort of information; it is the method of the scholar and not that of the creative soul, (The two approaches invariably clash!) Without entering too much into the subject here, I should like to point out what may easily be done to insure a better product from the older and inveterate rhymesters.

I have just finished reading a thousand or more poems written by upper-school boys and girls. All have appeared in school magazines of good repute; but much of it is bad, and much could easily have been better. I know of one way to make it better, but school poets do not like to be told about it. It hurts. I am sure of this much, however, that if they can stand the operation they will be on the way to a cure. It may be they will not write poetry again; which would be unfortunate, for one of the ways of growth is through self-expression, and it is dangerous to stop any healthful natural activity through pride or fear of pain or any other social terror; but more than likely, as my experience with young persons constantly proves, these poets—if they can stand the strain—will come upon unknown and unguessed personal powers and will proceed thereafter to exhibit a really astonishing product. Others have done just that.

I begin bluntly by telling them that their work is largely copied stuff. Their rhymes, for instance, are other people's rhymes. Proof: moon, June; showers, flowers; vain, pain; sky, high; brook, nook; shades, glades; hark, lark; spring, sing—picked out of the first few pages opened. Those ancient rhymes have kept shop at the old stand since grandfather's grandmother wore pinafores; they are the resource of all the fake poets in the land. Their presence, to those whose ear has been trained for the finer tones of poetry, is a confession of mediocrity; and unless elevated by superior thinking and feeling they are genuinely painful.

Further, their rhymes are invariably placed upon the spot of greatest emphasis, the end of a completed phrase, giving the monotonous effect of a series of bangs upon the ear. In good poetry the rhyme is not so strenuously emphatic, unless a comic effect is intended; one is rarely aware of the rhyme at all, its intention being that of an important overtone.

II

The novice is also known by his use of poetic words. I have only to note, *sapphire*, *jade*, *amethyst*, *lush*, *soul*, *amber*, *dreams*, *sorrow*, *pain*, *joy*, *gay*, especially *so gay*, *n'er thee*, *'twas*, and the like, to remind the observant ones. The stale poetic vocabulary of other days suggests only posing and insincerity.

His phrases are copied, too. All his streams ripple, all his lakes are silver (so is his moon), and his trees whisper in the gentle—guess what? Breeze? Right! His rain always beats down or it falls in torrents; his evening shadows are purple; his whippoorwills call mournfully in the solemn night. (My whippoorwill is a healthy, optimistic idiot screaming, "*You* come here!" to his lady friend up the hill, who yells back, "You come *here!*" For hours they keep it up with amorous obstinacy: "*You* come here!" "You come *here!*" "*You* come here!" "You come *here!*" And they just never get *any*where. It's me that's mournful. No; I *don't* mean I. I mean ME! About one A. M. I'm shying rocks at their roosts and saying things aloud. Solemn night? Anything *but* a solemn night.)

His fire shadows dance, his twilights fade, his tall ladies are stately, his little girls romp, his eyes have a twinkle in them, all his smiles are roguish, and all his laughs are merry.

There is no life in any of that language any more. It has been completely used up by others long ago.

"If all the language is used up," he might ask, "what is left for me?"

A marvelous treasure, is the answer. The sign reads: FORTY THOUSAND MILLION NEW AND TRUE PHRASES NEVER BEFORE OFFERED TO THE PUBLIC Now Sold for the First Time at the Merely Nominal Price of Nothing-at-all. One should warn the buyer, however, that these are mixed with the shoddy, extravagant, fantastic, and bizarre. *Caveat emptor!*

The revelation of his borrowings is, I find, the beginning of poetic wisdom; but for a while it may leave him dumb. Beautiful thoughts inside of him and nothing to say them with. Beautiful but dumb. True enough. For a while. Then he may take a try at the Forty Million New and True; with such funny results at first that even the most serious young poet may decide that he has the gift of humor.

If he feels bad after this analysis I advise him to read his old stuff over and he'll feel worse. But there is no way to get better.

III

Most little children are balked in the use of their best language by the universal insistence upon rhyme, but it is amazing, at times, to see how even this obstruction is circumvented by ingenious childhood. Here are some illustrations of the work of youngsters wherein, in spite of the restriction to their best thinking, they have managed to present a creditable bit. Oftentimes they achieve only a comic effect, but in each instance there was a struggle away from the obvious rhyme-association, a selection and a judgment in the use of a constrained vocabulary.

THE TRUTH

To read, to write, to learn to sew;
But the thing a girl *likes* to do
Is to catch a beau.
Grade IV.

SLEEP

Sitting on the chair
Swinging my legs so gay:
When I turned around—
It was the next day!
Age four.

From *Blue Beads and Amber* by the child-author Mary Virginia Harriss.

I WONDER

I wonder what the angels do
Throughout the live-long day.
I wonder why the sky is blue,
And when it rains it's gray.

I wonder where the rain comes from,
And how a buggy crawls,
And how the great big work-a-men
Put up the great big walls.
Grade IV.

This is packed with the fantastic make-believe and the eerie scares of ancient All Saints' Eve:

HALLOWE'EN

A laugh, a spark,
Bodies in the dark—
  It's Hallowe'en!

A light, a shout,
And more, come out,
  It's Hallowe'en!

A movement in the leaves,
A ghost breathes,
  It's Hallowe'en!

An angel and a divil
Are civil
  On Hallowe'en!
Grade VI.

THE BLACKSMITH

Pound, pound, pound,
Is the blacksmith's work
He sits on a little stool all day
And passes his time
By pounding away.

Pound, pound, pound,
As he soles the horses' hoofs
Taking his time, taking his time,
He goes around to every hoof
Picking it up, putting it down,
Pound, pound, pound, pound.
Grade VIII.

I had some carrots
  They grew in the garden;
I pulled them up
  Without asking their pardon.
Grade I.

"This one," the children told their teacher, "makes you feel dizzy."

THE MERRY-GO-ROUND

Very
Merry we go
Around on the merry-go-round,
Up and down
Music we hear
Tunes that cheer
As we go round and round
And round and round.
Grade VIII.

JIMMY

Little Jimmy had a bell,
He went to ring it and he fell.
And then he cried because he fell,
But, *any*how, he rang the bell!
Grade III.

THE BEACH

While I was down upon the beach
And waves came up unto my reach,
And the gorgeous sun shone down
And made them seem a sparkling town.

And as I was dreaming still,
The little ships came in until
They filled the harbor wide
And stood, like soldiers, side by side.
Age nine.

FOX THOUGHTS

Onward I speed,
I'm swift, I'm free!
The hounds are following, following me!
Up and over the boulder I spring,
Over and up, like a bird on the wing.

Onward I speed,
I'm swift, I'm free!
The hounds have stopped at the foot of the tree.
The hounds are baffled!
Baffled by me!

Age eleven.

All of the rhymed illustrations in this chapter have been given to me by parents or by teachers; I do not know any of these young authors personally. In consequence we may have inadvertently published here as the work of a child a bit of verse which some reader may recognize as really the invention of maturity. This paragraph is inserted, as a matter of fact, to cover the omission from the first edition of a beautiful poem of only twelve words, presented by a teacher as the expression of one of her girls, taken from Dorothy Aldis' *Everything and Anything* published by Minton, Balch & Company; and of verses given me by a father as the original work of his seven-year-old girl but which one of our early readers located in Olive Miller's *Sunny Rhymes for Happy Children.* With very young children who have been too well fed on jingles, whose imitative skill has been aroused but whose inner creative life has not been touched, one must be on guard. Of course the children are often quite innocent. They really do not know the difference between the product of their own imagining and the product of their clever memory.

The copied thing is often found also in hard school environments which, suddenly awakening to the new styles in creative expression, begin a fierce drive for "results."

Experience has made me suspicious of all rhymed verses done by very young children. Rhyming is not their own language; at best it is an imitation of an adult form of writing; or it is the outcome of an adult drive on the child's fine desire to please the older loved ones. The child who has once found the way to his own rich illimitable store of wonder-thoughts will never even desire to borrow from another.

One of Miss Katharine Barbour's little girls* gives us the following astonishingly profound quatrain. In its way it is a perfect thing, and, undoubtedly, it is superior because of the fine use of rhyme.

God keeps a flower garden
Of joys and loves and things like these;
He has a kitchen garden, too,
Of terrible necessities.

STARLAND

Don't you see that little star?
Way up there so far, so far?
Wouldn't you like to be up there
To see the queen with her silver hair,
To see the cats that have no tails,
To see the snakes that carry pails,
To see the rabbits that have no ears,
To see the monster that sheds the tears?
O wouldn't you like to be up there,
To see the queen with her silver hair?
Age twelve.

THE KNIGHT OF NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

I heard of a Knight of Nottinghamshire
  Who lived in days of old,
And he was ever hunting the deer
  With his wonderful squire so bold

---

*In *Nurturing the Creative Spirit; a Symposium of Teachers, Progressive Education*, January-March, 1928.

Sometimes he went out with the king
And sometimes he went alone
He loved to go when the moon had a ring
And sleep on a slab of stone.
Grade V.

The following stanza by H. Z., of Westwood, New Jersey, shows a rare gift in the right placing of all the musical elements of verse:

GOD'S WORKSHOP

April! and on the shining hills
The ancient miracle of birth;
Lo! God is forging daffodils
Upon the anvil of the earth.
Grade VII.

IV

Even high-school pupils have a difficulty in keeping rhyme in its subordinate place. They use it best, I often think, when they let it strut in premeditated humor, as witness these delightful bits from Miss Beatrice Scott's Creative English class, Montclair, New Jersey:

DRAWING IN CHURCH

I love to draw in church when the sermon's going on
(Though people frown, for they don't think it's right)
But Mummy doesn't care, if I don't make any noise,
And snuggle up beside her, very tight.
Once *Mummy* drew a pig with a little twisty tail
And stand-up ears and a *nawful* funny snout.
We both tried not to laugh, but I got so *streamly* giggly
That Mummy simply *had* to take me out.

SOMEDAY

I'm not appreciated.
When folks pass, they say
"'Lo, kid!" in an ordinary way
As if maybe I didn't have fine
Schemes they haven't. And someday mine
Will make them wish they'd said
"Why, *how* d' you *do!*"—when I'm dead.

ONCE I KNEW A LOVELY MAN

Bald men stir me to sympathy:
It is not often that I see
One that I do not sigh
And wipe a salt tear from my eye.

For I will tell you: Once I knew
A lovely man. His eyes were blue
(That is, one was) and on his pate
There grew a hair. But one night late—

"Will you be mine?" he said to me.
I was o'erjoyed, but said, "Let's see,
Tomorrow's Wednesday—I will say
Yes or No on Saturday."

(I really intended to have him, you know,
But it isn't the thing to out and say so.
I admit I was wrong, but, pray, tell me how
I then should know all the things I know now?)

He sighed (It really was a cruel thing,
And I regret; that's why I sing
You this sad song). He took his hat
And, smiling wanly, left my flat.

Straight down the elevator shaft he fell.
("Intoxication," some said) I know well

That, howsoever that may be,
He killed himself because of me.

Bald men stir me to sympathy:
It is not often that I see
One that I do not sigh
And wipe a salt tear from my eye.

In frankly doggerel verse the effect of the obvious rhyme and the exaggerated sing-song cadence serve excellently for heightening the humor. Out of the Southwest come illustrations of just this sort of original and near-original humor, the story of whose discovery is most pertinent here.

After a summer study of manifestations of the creative life in childhood, Superintendent Herman E. Hendrix of Mesa, Arizona, called his teachers and principals together at the beginning of the term and invited them to discuss with him the possibilities of undiscovered powers and interests among the children under their charge. He encouraged them to believe that no barrier should be put to the endeavor of youth in these regards; that one should be ready to count as acceptable anything in which there is evidence of genuine delight; that, indeed, one should measure the worth of a product of youth by the joy in creating it.

He filled them with his own feeling about the matter and sent them forth. At his suggestion they went directly to the children with the story of their new point of view and boldly offered a sympathetic reception to anything which they wished to offer. At this welcoming word an astonishing flowering sprouted forth of hidden and hitherto unsuspected delights. I have seen some of the vast outpourings; they represent every grade from the primary class to senior high. Incidentally came, here and there, revelations of personal life-stories of rare importance to the elder guides and counselors, which no informational drill would ever have brought to the attention of the friendly teachers in those schools.

Before he started out on his adventure I had suggested that perhaps the creative work from his section might be different in its content from the sort of thing that had appeared in the East and Middle West. The wide expanse of open and even wild country, the semitropical vegetation, the ancient mesas, the Indians, the great ranches with their annual rodeos—the O-Bar-O was right at their door: all these had entered into the creative life and should, I suspected, show somehow in the product. That was a guess, to be sure, but the results more than verified our theory. The "cowboy on his creaking saddle," cries of "Stay with him!" "Buckaroo!" pictures of "Swingin' back an' forth in the saddle an' roundin' up the bellerin' cattle," and riding home "by a dried-up river course," this native ore was streaked through the finds.

In this collection was an amusing doggerel *The Gallopin' Gay Galoot* which, we were assured, was the product of a pupil. It had been published, indeed, in the local newspaper as the work of a high-school girl and was accepted without question, but it turns out to be only a fair memory of a much longer ballad whose source is probably lost in the traditions of that part of the country.

I have before me a sheaf of striking verses of a third-grade class which, under the guidance of an understanding teacher, has just begun to try out its new notes. Here and there are phrasings and little thinkings wholly strange and delightful, even when the theme is one, Jack Frost, for instance, which has been treated over and over again in reader and story book; but echoes of remembered word and line creep in appropriately among the private pictures, as one might quote a friendly author. "He paints the grass with his silver brush," I note as a favorite line. And some, having written down the poem they have loved in their reading, seem really to believe that they themselves have just "made it up."

Those of us who have frequently to deal with this problem of originality are not disturbed. We know it to be a natural and to-be-expected phase on the way up toward complete mastery of the creative powers.

My experience teaches me to be particularly suspicious of verse with obvious and banging rhymes. That is the sort of thing which children continually hear. It enters, therefore, into their very being; we should not be surprised if some of it comes out completely appropriated. The free rhythms, however, are more likely to be wholly the work of the children. No energetic elders have been putting that into them! And we are more assured if the composing happens orally right before our eyes, as, for instance, these lines, part of a long soliloquy, which were copied down as a boy told slowly, with great pauses in between, of a Make-Believe Land right there back of the work bench in the third grade room:

There is the High Rock
Where I talk to the ships;
And there in the grass
Is where I sleep,
Or watch the clouds
Resting or hurrying
In the Big Race
Across the world.

V

The discussion of rhyme was begun in the previous chapter with a cautious note of fear; it ends with that. Particularly I fear that person with a complex on the subject. He seems to have arrived at a mental stage when he has about ceased taking in the other person's contribution to thinking; and words stir him to madness, not ideas. Should one begin to discuss his subject—or even to name it!—he becomes a wild raging thing, denouncing and flaying. You might shout in his ear that you are completely on his side in the debate, but still, once started, he continues to denounce.

That sort of person has often arisen to protest when in sympathetic groups I have tried to draw attention to a neglected value in child language, my sole object, of course, in stirring up so controversial a matter. To my real surprise, I find that *rhyme*, like *liar*, is evidently a fighting word. I wish some even-tempered soul would someday tell me why!

For purposes of record and evidence, therefore, I hereby state that I am not opposed to rhyme, that I believe it to be one of the finest ornaments of verse, that I would not prevent the natural use of it by children, that I would encourage children who employ it wisely for the purposes of self-expression, that I rejoice in Carroll, Stevenson, Milne, and others who have given us delightful rhymes for our children. I will even confess that my one personal ambition in creative verse is to make superior doggerel, being still proud of the following couplet written years ago for a friend:

DDV

I had rather be Doctor of Doggerel Verses
Than ride—as the freight—in the *smartest* of hearses.

To those who know what this book is really about, these statements will not seem a contradiction of the main thesis.

Not to complicate a simple matter by even more seeming contradictions, space must be given to a kind of natural rhyming which very young children employ when they are undoubtedly expressing themselves in their native language. It is an echo in part, of course, of all that they have heard in reading or being read to.

They bring rhyme in or not as suits them; it rarely interfers with their imaginings because they do not think much about it and do not believe it always essential. It depends upon the effects they wish to make (not that they think too much about that either) and often they mix the rhymed and the unrhymed (as did William Shakespeare) and sometimes they outjingle the best of them.

From out in the Ojai Valley School in California, Nell Curtis writes of one of her eight-year-olds, "He came to me in the morning and said, 'I've got a poem in my mind. When could I have time to write it? I thought of it last night after the lights were out.' It's the *realest* poem that ever was written," she adds, "because so expressive of the boy."

One sees at once why we are concerned about this sort of performance; not because it is poetry or isn't; frankly we do not care much about the product itself; our interest goes out to the value in growth of personality that comes from genuine self-expression. Here is that "realest poem":

I WISH

I wish I were an engine
A-running on the rails
And every now and then
I would ring my big bell.

I wish I were a steam-shovel
A-tugging at the dirt,
I'd lift heavy loads
Without getting hurt.

No, I don't want to be an engine
A-running on the rails,
No, I don't want to be a steam-shovel
A-tugging at the dirt.
But on the sea
I wish to be
Amongst the rigging
Or down in the hold,
Or look upon the open sea
And know that I am always free.
And all the time
Down at the bow
The waves would be dashing high
And I'd know that a sailor
Is always full of joy.

Here is one from a seven-year-old who uses rhyme without much sacrifice of thought or feeling. "He handed it to me with a most gleeful smile," says Miss Curtis:

THE SHIP

A ship was a-sailing
  On the sea
  On the sea
A sailor waved
  To me
  To me
I waved back
  In glee
  In glee

As a truce to those who would quarrel over what is or what is not the true expression of the voice of youth, let us end on a high note of agreement with this superb lyric by H. E. M. sent to me in the latest volume of The Evander Child's *Anthology of Student Verse:*

PRUDENT APRIL

If I can only come safely through April
And keep my eyes detached and cold
And keep my dreams behind my lips
And on my heart a firm, sure hold,

This would be different from other Aprils;
This would be peacefully quiet, and then
I could go softly the rest of the year—
But, oh, my heart is high again!

Chapter XII

COPY CATS

When I get to know the older children of a group well enough to have them believe in my interest in them I gather the writers together and good-naturedly call them "copy cats." I twit them for using easy rhymes, for letting the rhyme carry their real thinking away from them, for using "poetic" words and *clichès* that no longer have either life or honest sincerity in them.

In other words, I accuse them of not working and of not thinking for themselves. That's why I call them copy cats. Not that they deliberately "lift" their poetry from the works of other poets, but that they are repeating the very pattern of other writers without knowing that they are offering nothing of their very own.

I say all this because I like these lads and lasses, because I believe in them, and because I know that they are a rare and worthy group. All fine prose writers were poets in their youth. The only surely known way to write is first to be a poet. I do not hesitate to predict that from these young poetasters will come the first-line writers of the next generation. But they must learn much before they may take their stand with the best. And one of the foremost things to learn is that one's own good work is never, never, never like anybody else's good work.

I show them poetry done by four- and five-year-old children that belongs with the very best, even judged by mature standards; and in every instance the poem is so individual, so fresh and original in form, word, and thought, that it neither looks nor sounds nor feels like anything ever written before.

The second thing to learn, I tell them, is to stand severe criticism. And I do not mean mere fault finding; I mean criticism that both points out the evil and shows instantly how to amend.

"Are you prepared for a good blow?" I ask. If I have made the right friendly approach someone is sure to say, "Shoot!"

"Put up your props, then," I say, and go for them somewhat in this wise:

II

You not only copy your rhymes and your phrases and your verse-forms, but you also copy your ideas.

Think of it; I am accusing you of not thinking at all. Prove it? Oh, that is easy! Here is the proof:

When the word spring comes into your mind, as it is bound to be coming soon, you think of the robin hopping on the lawn. That is, you think you think. "The robin is hopping on the lawn," you write excitedly, whether a robin is really hopping on the lawn, whether you have ever seen a robin, whether you have ever seen a lawn.

One would think, from the way you carry on about the robin, that there are no other birds about in the spring. Yet the chickadee, the downy woodpecker, and the European starling are here, I know, for they stay in these parts all winter. The goldfinch is changing his coat from olive to lively gold. This very week four red-winged blackbirds were raising a racket in the snow by my spring; and the bluebird, the cowbird, and the phœbe were busy staking out summer claims. The meadow lark has just arrived and is practicing his first notes, but the song sparrow is already in full song. Without much search in the open wintry scene before me I found the mourning dove and the myrtle warbler, and a junco or two that had not yet gone North.

But none of these are for you! "The robin is hopping on the lawn," you sing, while you gaze soulfully out of your window where six sparrows are fighting on the edge of a tin cup.

Fifty years ago some real poet sang about a real robin which was really hopping on his real lawn; then the schoolbook writers put it in the primers. The first thing you read about when you came to school was the exciting story of that fifty-year-old robin, and you came home breathless to tell your mother and sister; and you've been telling it to everybody ever since, until you begin to think you invented it.

For a while, by the way, the bobolink was in style, crowding out the robin, but he didn't last long. I don't know why.

And when the fall comes, you seize pencil to write this original bit of thinking: "All the leaves are falling!"

That's another startling idea you got from somebody else. If you had really thought the matter out for yourself you would have noted that the leaves do not fall in the fall. That is, they do not fall to any appreciable extent while you are looking at them. They come down during storms, when presumably you are indoors, or at night or in the early morning when most of the stiff breezes blow. The really astonishing thing is that the leaves do manage somehow to get to the ground. The whole business is achieved so secretly as almost to make a mystery of it.

And all the leaves do not fall in the fall. Haven't any of you noticed that the oak leaves stay on the tree all winter? And some leaves give up in July; and some keep a grip on their perch until December; and July and December have never been listed in my calendar as fall months.

No; you haven't been thinking at all. Certain words invariably recall bits of information that you have heard from others. The word fall suggests that the leaves are falling, and you say it, whether leaves are falling or not. It also suggests that the days are mournful and melancholy; another false fact that you borrowed from the sad-eyed poets of your grandfather's day.

Your prize thought, however, is about winter. One has only to say the word winter and the school poet scribbles on the margin of his history book: "In winter all the trees are bare!"

Of course winter trees are not bare at all. They are beautifully clothed. If you persist in saying that in winter all the trees are bare it means that you have never really looked at winter trees nor seen their astonishing beauty. A live winter tree fills its space in the sky with myriad twigs and shoots hidden from view in the summer; they seem almost to have come out just for the winter to give the tree its appropriate vestments. In winter it is, when the confusion of leaves has gone, that the tree shows its marvelous balance and symmetry; but always, to the seeing eye, it is a picture of strong limbs garmented in lace-like tones of gray; and long before the winter has passed these take on subtle tints of brown and bronze and even green, sometimes, notably with the willows, lighting up the snowscape with a flowery glow of yellow. The artists know winter trees and love to paint them; but rarely do they give them the suggestion of something pitifully stripped and bare.

So much for the outside world. You have not looked at it with the frank curiosity of one wanting to know; rather, you have not looked at all but have taken for truth the cheapest kind of gossip about it. You write of the North Wind and do not know that the North Wind is such a rarity that it might almost be said to be a myth. You got the idea, of course, from an old English source ("The North Wind doth blow and we shall have snow," etc); just as you picked from British verse of long ago ideas about larks and nightingales. Copied, every bit of it.

But your real plagiarism is with the world of feeling, the human world of which you are a part. When you write of that you miss the shouting evidence beside your very ears. You think fear is expressed by trembling and excited running about when it is often masked by cool silence. You think weeping is a sign of weakness or defeat. You think that downcast eyes are a confession of guilt. You think cowards are white-faced. You think indignation is an expression of boldness or even of anger, whereas it is often only a revelation of timidity. You think good-natured, laughing, merry chaps are free from worry or depression. You think—but really you do not think at all.

Take a walk, my friends, and look at the world about you. See it as for the first time. Observe your fellows as if you had never before heard of such funny, admirable, odd-looking creatures. And take a most scrutinizing look at your funny, admirable self. Cast out everything you have ever heard about these important subjects; doubt the truth of all you have read about them. Then you may begin to think; and if you once begin really to think you can have the said world at your own funny, admirable feet.

Have I proved that I am interested in you, that I believe in you, that I wish you well? Have I? If you are really beginning to think, you will know.

Chapter XIII

A HUMDRUM LOT

In a large study group of nearly one hundred teachers I could not miss the strong face of an elderly woman who remained for weeks unaffected either by my enthusiastic portrayal of the possibilities of the creative life in education or by the exciting material, "finds," we called them, which were being brought in daily by young teachers. Poetry, paintings, clay figures, models of inventions, stage settings, woodcraft, tincraft, clothcraft, linoleum prints, these and other manifestations of the spirit of youth left my fine old lady calmly and pleasantly cold.

She had an eye, however. It was luminously eloquent and humorous. It talked back at me all the time, forcing me to work twice as hard; often it sent me away with the sensation of having made no more than an interesting fool of myself. I found myself secretly bent upon dislodging that serene calm, but the course had gone on through the winter before even a chance came.

It was not difficult to discover that she had a one-room school in a satisfied village; that she was a genial but perfect autocrat; that the children who sat silently for the five hours of her school day "learned something"; that if they did not they stayed longer; that in her room the curriculum was next in sanctification to the Constitution of the United States; that she was the leading intellectual light of her village; that the townspeople and the children feared her, respected her, obeyed her, admired her, and, whenever possible, avoided her.

Her powerful spell began to work on me also; but, then, I am easily overawed by powerful women; I also feared, respected, obeyed, admired, and avoided. Yet she teased me with a challenge.

One day she stayed after the others had gone. The engaging smile that mingled with the fine health of her handsome old face was most disarming. I took a long breath and tried not to think of the days long ago when just such superior persons kept me after school.

"You are a most insinuating young man," she said coolly, but with frank friendliness.

"Thanks for the 'young man,'" said I.

"Young is merely relative," she rejoined. "To me you are young. Almost thou persuadest me, young man, to be an educational progressive."

"Let me show you all the power and the glory of the kingdoms of the world," I begged, playing the Devil to her Paul.

Her bright eye glowed. She loved debate, the active tossing back and forth of idea, but, alas, she confessed to me later, her opponents had never lasted long enough to give her any real fun out of it. She was well aware of the fear she inspired, and made every use of it for her own ends; but she loathed all who ran from her; and she hungered for the companionship of minds of her own staunch virility.

"Of course you would not get the quotation exact," she smiled. "It is 'All the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them.' But then I know that you preach the value of inaccuracy."

"I merely remember that the devil can quote Scripture accurately for his purpose," said I, "so I get no particular exultation out of the classification."

"The devil you say, indeed!"

And so we joked and became very friendly; but she got quickly down to business. "There are no creative geniuses in my school," she said. "I have been watching them for weeks. A humdrum lot of ordinary, natural, everyday children. Therefore I shall have no creative work to offer you as my contribution."

"You control your school?" I asked.

"Assuredly."

"You are the master?"

"That's what I'm hired to be."

"They do pretty much what you want done?"

"Pretty much?" she mocked me. "I have a higher standard than 'pretty much,' young man!"

"Then," I corrected my phrase, "they do what you expect of them?"

"Precisely. If not the first time, then the second time; if not the second time, then the third time; and so on. There is just no escape; so I get my results. I hope I am kind; but I am firm and determined. That takes work, let me tell you. But in the end I get what I am after."

"Orderly, obedient children?"

"Yes."

"Knowing their lessons?"

"Eventually."

"Quiet and respectful?"

"Come visit my classroom!" With pride.

"A humdrum lot of ordinary, everyday children?"

"Yes."

"Without a sign of a creative gift?"

"Without a sign."

I waited and then quoted solemnly, "'And God said, Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness. So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him.'"

She pondered over that, giving me the while a most searching stare of incredulity.

"But you haven't quite succeeded in creating those children after your own image," I continued. "They like you and they believe in you; and, no doubt, they are striving to model their lives upon your conception of what is right; but within them is a disorderly, unquiet protest. That is their creative selves; their individuality, personality, what you will; that is the thing they must live with all their lives, and it is the only thing that will save them and give them place in the battle of the world. You have not entirely succeeded in shaping them in your own image. . . . But they say that even God failed, you know."

After a moment or two she summoned her argument. The world needs the obedient, the unthinking, the uncreative, the workers.

I agreed. It is inevitable that the great mass will find its low place serving under other minds; the creative persons will rule them and pay them their small wage. A kind of hopeless economic slavery awaits the majority of mankind. It may be that it is a necessary condition; I do not know enough to find an answer for all; but I do know a way out for the few who come my way. There is hardly space to move among the mob of servile ones, but there is ample place among the creative leaders. A child who comes my way must be given the chance to step out of that possible future bondage. I summon the individual spirit; I try to give it its chance to grow in strength, although the process is worrisome and fraught with peril. That powerful rebel within us which never really succumbs to circumstance, that creator, who may fashion miracles out of the dust of the earth, that, I often fancy, is the image God created in His own likeness. God, I think, does not fail; it is we who continually miss His meaning.

II

We had other meetings, of great pleasure and profit to both of us. After a while she became conscious of the fact that I was working upon her own creative spirit, summoning it forth to think and feel and act; challenging the undeveloped strength of her own individual personality. She was aware of some of the technique: my faith in her ability to transcend even her own belief in herself; proofs of that ability presented to her, as her active mind brought to the surface this and that extraordinary bit of thinking; a final exposing of an astonishingly well-concealed weakness, a conviction, quite unwarranted, that she was too old to take up new things.

She asked for specific help with her children. I promised to think over the problem and to come with suggestions. I warned her, however, that there was no sure way out applicable to every situation; that none of us knew enough to be dogmatic.

On meeting again I asked her if she ever had anyone in her classes who continued to scribble or draw even after she had called for general attention.

"Not for long!" she said grimly.

"Exactly," I agreed. "But they have tried momentarily?"

"Oh, yes." She was always calmly good-humored, even when her words were commanding. "That is one of the bad habits it is my business to eradicate, fooling and trifling, when we have work to do. I teach them to give all their attention to the school job, to concentrate. If I were not on strict guard their silly minds would wander here and there and everywhere. I make it a rule to have all desks cleared, keeping away every temptation to scribble and draw. Yes, there are some who persist for a short time, but—eventually they find I am too strong for them. They soon discover they had better give all that up. Oh, I assure you, young man, there is no nonsense in my room. And the children learn to prefer it my way; they are happier at their school tasks."

"Well, I am asking you to permit a little nonsense."

"Nonsense!" she echoed, intensely pleased with her neat retort.

"You asked me to show you how to discover the gifted creative ones in your class. I am showing you. The next time you observe a child scribbling furtively or drawing, the one, I mean, who keeps it up until you have to summon again for attention to the school tasks, take particular note of that one——"

"Don't you worry, young man!" she came back swiftly; "I will take note! Particular note!"

"You asked me to help you?"

"All right." She grew genial and waved an apology. "Go on with your amusing—nonsense."

"It is from that group," I told her, "that we are discovering our artists and writers. The others have been beaten and have surrendered. As you say, you—and the others of us who fight them—are too strong for them. They give up and find their happiness in doing what they are told to do, that is, somebody else's creative work. But those who continue, fighting a guerrilla warfare under your very nose, have too great an urge to create. Eventually they will give up; but they will fight longer and give trouble and be the problem cases in your school."

"All my bad boys are artists, I suppose?" she interrupted.

"Everyone is an artist," I replied. "Whoever creates is an artist; and who does not create? This conversation is an art product. Back of our talk is our secret mind fabricating animated thought that does not even appear in speech. Living things are ever stooping in the dust of the earth and making an image and breathing into it the breath of life; it varies from the servile following of another's will, where it is almost at zero, to the freedom of complete self-expression. Independence is another name for it; the greatest wars have always been fought for it. It is something we must always take care to respect in an individual, or we do inexpressible damage to his best possession. Living things are creative artists every second of time; cash registers and typewriters are not."

"So I am an artist!" she said. "You give me a nice, satisfying thought about myself. In your sense I suppose I am. But I doubt if I had ever thought of giving that credit to anybody else. I grant them to be cash registers. Oh, yes! And sewing machines. And push buttons. And delivery trucks. And phonograph records," her active mind went on. "And mechanical dolls—highly painted, of course!"

"Isn't it, really, the best part of us?" I asked her abruptly as she was caught up in the excitement of her images. "This interplay of mind, the give and take of good talk, it comes out of the best thing we possess."

"Undoubtedly," she agreed. "I am famished at times for good talk. And in my village I don't often get it. Famished! I grow bitter because of my lack and sail into people. I——" She was too proud to tell me more.

"And suppose someone stopped you when you wished most to have it?" I asked, trying to edge around to the topic we had left for the moment. But her eager mind ran swiftly before me and headed off my argument.

"I am always stopped. In the midst of the sermon I would rise and cry out my objections and my agreements. I would say my say in the market place, particularly in our village market place, where they ask the most outrageous prices for inferior stuff. I am always stopped. And a good thing, that, too. I have no desire to be a gesticulating old granny trotting up and down the town streets. Thank the Lord I have learned the antidote, which is control."

"Control, I grant you," I agreed. "We must all learn control. The sign of the best artistry is just that. The creative force must not be permitted to waste itself; it must be directed: slowed up, stopped when necessary, let go to the limit, thinned out, spread wide; but unless the direction comes from the creative artist himself he is nothing more than a machine or an enslaved person. Control is one of the greatest subjects of study; but I do not find it, in my sense, in any curriculum. But that is another and later story. Let us come back to your little rebels."

"They don't remain rebels long, I assure you. I control them."

"Of course you do. And that is why you never find out anything fine in them. That is why you cannot discover a single sign of creative artistry in your group. It is there all the time; but you have stamped it out; or, rather, you have driven it to cover. I am telling you that it is among those scribblers and sketchers that we have found our first able ones."

She tried to interrupt, but I begged her to listen. "The next time one of these little rebels resists you, let him go on with whatever he is doing; and when it is finished, go to him pleasantly and inquire what he is doing. But you had better take a lesson on how to do that. Unless you study this lesson you will simply frighten him off."

"A lesson in what?" she inquired, really puzzled.

"A lesson in how to ask a child a personal question," I answered.

"I think my years in the classroom have taught me how to ask personal questions," she retorted.

"I doubt if you have ever really asked one," I came back. She bristled at that, but I continued, "All our questions in the classroom are impertinent and highly unsportsmanlike quizzes to discover and punish the guilty ones who have not obeyed us. With book in hand we ask questions; but we require their books to be shut. Hardly sporting! We rarely ask a question whose answer we do not already know. To show up ignorance is our great game. No wonder that, as a professional group, we are disliked and caricatured in joke book and on wayside fences. Now, for years I have rarely asked a child a question unless I really did not know the answer myself and believed that he could tell me. The very tone of such questions is different—more pleasant, more humanly friendly, than those inquisitions of the ordinary classroom. So you will have to practice a new art; you must learn how to inquire, in the tones of an ignorant person who is really interested in getting knowledge. I doubt if you could say, 'Do you draw, George? Won't you let me see your drawing?' I mean, say it without overwhelming George with a sense of guilt."

"I doubt it myself," she laughed.

"I would suggest practice before a mirror."

"Do you want to discourage me completely?" she asked. Her really beautiful smile followed, so intelligent and friendly.

"There!" I cried. "That is just the way to ask a child a personal question. If you come with that warm sympathy and that lovely smile no one in the world could resist you!"

III

She went off in fine fettle. Something youthful had come into her bearing. Of course I had played upon the creative instincts of her own restricted life; the thought that she, even at her age, could "make" something out of the child-material in her keeping, was a kindling of new life within her. She was off on an untried exploration; and, whatever the chronological age, it is only the young in spirit who can have a relish for adventure.

"Caught one at the first attempt!" was her remark on meeting again. "That is, if this is it," she added dubiously. A rather unclean page of copied cartoons was the result, rather good memories of this and that national figure among the comics. They were done with a hard lead on the grayish leaves of a blue-lined blankbook. The pencil had slipped through occasionally to make plunging holes.

This is just about the commonest type of drawing urge; I suppose every other boy does it some time or other; and she had brought it in as an astonishing novelty. Here, or something like this, is the beginning of every artist, but if he continues in the copying stage, among the crude flat reproductions of the printed page, he may arrive at a dead-end street. To grow, his art must leave this region and begin to collect from his own experience. However, she had captured one of these lads whose private interest was stronger than duty, obligation, or fear.

I showed her that his swift, sure line was an acquirement which he must have learned through many hours of a self-imposed task, but I begged her to give him better materials: a drawing board, some of that nice drawing paper which every school has, a soft pencil, and possibly later a grease pencil.

"A grease pencil?" she inquired. "The man will be having me use a lipstick next!"

"Why not?" I whispered.

"Young man——" she began, but a daredevil light came into her eyes; she flashed a mischievous challenge to me that set us both off into gales of inexplicable laughter.

Finally we got back to our lad. I requested that he be placed at the side of the room—merely so as not to bother her, for she was not used to anything in a class-recitation but dumb attention—and that he be made the class illustrator in a given lesson, say reading. Of course he should have better materials to work with. She said she would attend to that. We have found that the result jumps enormously in value when official recognition is given to it. And this device would serve to drive him away from his beloved newspaper models and throw him in upon himself.

The outcome was rather astonishing to both of us: beautiful dreamy pictures to illustrate *Evangeline*, crude, of course. They went up on the casing above the blackboard, reserved hitherto for perfect spellings and perfect maps and perfect arithmetic papers.

Other artists appeared, naturally, as we predicted they would. A teacher's approval of the right sort is like rain to good ground. These were the ones that had been practicing in secret, too timid (or too intelligent!) to risk bringing their work into that environment. After these came those who had never tried but would serve any popular god.

So began her delightful discovery of servitors of the creative life. A day came when she said, "One of my boys is an expert cabinet maker. He has a shop of his own in his cellar. And he does the finest kind of dowel work. His father is a barber and has no notion how his son learned to handle wood so well; he says the boy was always interested in tools. He is a good boy in school, and I should never have suspected him. Some of the others told me about him and *I have been down in his cellar admiring*. Beautiful things! Tiny boxes, with drawers fitted like a watch. And he does astonishing lacquer!... And he was there all the time, and I didn't know it! That is even more astonishing, for, really, with all my pretence of indifference, I did think I knew my children."

A visiting teacher, an old pupil who therefore knew the lady very well, wrote me the next year:

> She has changed from something admirable but forbidding into a Joyous Light in the Darkness! The heavy solemnity has gone from her class-room. (I know all about that, for I spent some years in it). The old discipline just had to give way. The two things cannot exist side by side. And her room is alive with child-things, not school-things. I know you will understand what I mean. She has some astonishing big pictures in tempera. Gorgeous splashes! She has one of them framed, by one of the boys who does wonderful woodwork, right above her desk. . . . And the community has learned to adore her instead of merely respecting her. And think of the effect of *that* upon her! It has simply taken off a dozen years.

IV

Here is the place to tell a story which I shall carefully keep unlocalized. A magazine editor had brought me the verses of a high-school girl to inquire if I thought they could be her own, for he wished to publish them. Their expert maturity was indeed puzzling; but we wrote cautiously to the school, asking for qualifications, as if one were seeking word about an applicant for a job. Of course we said nothing about the verses, but we did inquire about her work in English. All the light we received in reply was, "We think she is interested in painting outside the school but her English is not distinctive."

Later her publications gave her something in the nature of fame, especially in her locality, so that one day she was invited to read some of her work before an audience which the editor had collected. At dinner later I complimented her upon her great power as a reader. "Poets do not usually read well," I told her. "But you have two gifts, you write and you read."

"There is something amusing about this reading," she said, "and about the writing, too. No one knew that I was writing, not even my best chum. I didn't even tell anybody that they were being printed until they found it out. Then I noticed that the school began to take on a pride in what it called its achievement! Of course they had had nothing at all to do with it, but I am very fond of them and I let them. It could do no harm. It was almost comical to see the way some of those teachers would look at me. A kind of 'Behold my work!' look. Then one of them heard of this reading, although I had done my best to keep it dark, and she sent for me. She told me to bring my program of verses.

"Do you know I was stupid enough not to suspect a thing? Of course I brought them. I like her—like her a lot. She has been very helpful to me; I have learned many things from her. But, of course, my verse—that she has never had anything to do with; no one has.

"She asked me to read the first one on my program. That one I did not read today. I can never read it again. After I had finished it she said *she* would now read it. She read it; in the most eloquent way, and with such world-embracing gestures! She was trying to teach me to read! Horrors!

"I just didn't know what to do, except that I knew that *that* poem was spoiled forever. I just *couldn't* let her go on with the others. She meant well, I know, but . . ." She gave a hopeless gesture. "So I doubled up and clapped my hands to my stomach and moaned. 'I'm sick,' I said, 'awful sick!' and grabbed my papers and beat it. I kept in my room until train time. Wasn't that amusing? Her thinking she could read my poetry for me! Of course, she couldn't know anything about my poetry. Nobody else could but me, now, could they?"

I leave with you the picture of the modern intelligent artist-child fleeing from the devastating threat of formal education!

Chapter XIV

ROOTS AND ABSOLUTES

An important group of the young people whom I knew long ago as children have grown to be distinguished men and women. They soon passed me by in the ranking system of the world. One of them, as I have related elsewhere, was my colonel in the Army. Another was one of the chief officers of an educational institution in which I served as simple private. One became an editor and was in position to reject my manuscripts. And one took complete charge of my affairs via a marriage contract in which I was only the party of the second part.

I have become used to their names in headlines; I have heard them mentioned in public in the casual way one discusses celebrities. And of the youths I have now in mind each has made a secure place for himself in the world (and for herself, of course) through the persistent cultivation of an inborn creative gift.

When I contemplate their assured success and at the same time bring to mind the clear picture I have of them when they were just likable, undistinguished boys and girls, I ask myself if I could possibly have foreseen then the high road they were destined to travel; and the answer is always, "No. I did not have the skill to foresee." Then I ask myself if these young persons had at that time any special abilities that might have given me a clue; and the answer is always, "Yes, but I had not the skill to discover them."

In this vigorous self-examination I should have to admit, further, that not only was I unaware of the creative gifts which these boys and girls possessed at the start, and through the use of which they moved upward, overcoming obstacle after obstacle, to make eventually distinguished names for themselves, but that I was part of a group who all unwittingly underrated them, and sometimes blamed them, for having such gifts; and, so great is the power of organized authority that during these years, as some of these distinguished citizens have told me recently, they themselves tried to suppress the instinctive powers within them, felt guilty, indeed, in possessing them, and believed us when we assured them that if they followed their own bent they would not only be foolishly wasting their time but that they would regret it in the end.

We were very kind, remember, and sympathetic; but the proof is now clear that we did not know what we were talking about.

How many children followed our advice and gave up the overwhelming desire to scribble verses, to make funny pictures on the margins of their books, to play baseball during study hours, to construct complicated apparatus of cardboard, wood, and iron, or even to loll about and dream, instead of busying themselves with tasks imposed by us—that we shall never know. But we do know that a few found the so-called evil urge too strong to resist; they persisted, secretly, in living their lives according to the desires of their own hearts; and while at first they "failed"—some having even to give up school because they could not live their own lives and at the same time prepare our long daily lessons—the future has placed them high in their chosen callings.

They "failed" with us, but in reality we were the ones who failed, for we did not recognize their creative genius; or if we did note it, we felt it our duty to censure them for having it.

II

I have in mind one of these, a fourteen-year-old girl, strangely mature for her years, who found no interest that matched her own in our insistence upon studies in cube root, nominative absolutes, the valves of the auricles, the exports of Dutch Guiana, the organization of the superior state courts, Spencerian penmanship, the administration of John Quincy Adams—to name a sample set of actual daily lessons.

She spent her time quietly sketching in a notebook. Interested in drawing she undoubtedly was, but we did not approve her work because she could not become interested in our kind of drawing which centered about the "plan and elevation" of a spool and the perspective of a wooden cube. So she gave up and left us, gave up the only path there then was to high school, normal school, or college, and, without a single word of advice or helpfulness from us—for we knew nothing about her creative gifts—put all her hours into her sketchbook.

Her silence is all I remember of her, her silence and her patient and kindly boredom at the long hours in school. When I heard of her again she was being mentioned as one of the young artists who were doing work of promise in portraiture. A little later she came into the news columns as the winner of an important traveling art scholarship.

Soon after that we all read with surprise a critique of her work from a recognized authority on such matters. "She has the rare gift," he said, "that is born with the artist and which, to the discerning, is clear even in childhood." Then, finally, in England we came upon her "one-man show," a public exhibition given over entirely to a presentation of her portraits; and all about us we heard of this and that great one who had given high appraisal to her work.

That gift "which, to the discerning, is clear even in childhood," none of us had had the discernment to see; but the famous William Merritt Chase, so I learned later, had seen it instantly as he watched her early sketches in his large art classes; he it was, not we, who had told her of her exceptional worth, who gave her courage to go on.

She told me one story of him that is pertinent to our theme. He was an uncompromising critic of students' work and wasted no time upon those who had no business in the serious art of painting. Others had received the annihilating rebuke, but for a time he had passed her by in silence. Then one afternoon he stood back of her for a full minute; she waited for the blow; her hands were trembling so violently that she could not continue her work, so dropped them helplessly to her sides.

He began quietly, but she was aware of that method of attack, reserved for the most advanced cases of ineptitude. "Where have you studied art before?" he asked casually.

She strove for breath but managed to say that she had been to no other art school. "Thank God for that," he advised her calmly, as if he were merely giving her instruction. The silence that followed as he scrutinized her painting was the very worst moment of her life, she claimed, more terrible than drowning.

Finally he said, "You have something that none of the others have, something of yourself which you never learned anywhere; which can never be learned anywhere. Now, the first chance you get, I want you to get away from this place." He arranged that, by the way, in putting all his influence toward securing for her the European traveling scholarship. "The first thing you know," he continued, stirred now into a little excitement, "you will be painting like all the others." He gave a contemptuous sweep of his hand. Then growing really intense he said, "*Worse*, you may begin to paint like *me!*"

The teachers of painting have always known the dangers of imitation and subservience, the two main practices of formal education. William Chase not only differed from us in his attitude toward education, but he had a quality of teacher-craft of which we knew just nothing: in the crude strivings of a child he could sense the possibilities of future power and distinction.

Perhaps we should not too much blame ourselves for our ignorance of such matters; but inasmuch as we teachers are really professors of childhood, with diplomas reciting our peculiar qualifications in this craft, one might well invite us to know more about our subject and less, perhaps, about our subjects. The life of a gifted child is more important, I fancy, than either cube root or the nominative absolute.

Personally, I am willing to own to a sensation of guilt; not on account of the girl who persisted in her lonely faith in herself, but for the hundreds of others whom I might have helped if I had been more "discerning." That is why nowadays I have more care for the boy or girl who makes sketches by stealth, even when I sometimes discover them to be fanciful and not altogether flattering caricatures of myself.

III

I turn now to a boy who was of another type entirely. He had one thing in common with the girl, to be sure, an obvious indifference to our daily tasks; and another, he was equally silent and undisturbing. Not brilliant, but a good boy, I should have described him. If asked if he had any interests outside of school I should probably have said, "I doubt it; he is just a healthy, unaggressive, stolid lad." But I might have added, "Oh, he plays baseball, sometimes to the neglect of a proper preparation of home assignments."

A very young teacher, however, not much more than a boy himself, thought differently. He kept bothering us about the boy's exceptional gift as a baseball player, insisting that it was a special coördination of eye, ear—yes, ear!—muscles, and brain which only the rare great ones had, and that this twelve-year-old lad had it!

I do not recall that any of us attended over carefully to the enthusiasm of this very young teacher. Baseball was not on our daily lesson plans. Young teachers do stir up extraordinary likings for this and that oddity among pupils; but they get over all that after a while. We turned to the real business of life, our cube roots and our nominative absolutes.

A year later the young teacher staged some sort of interschool baseball game—he was always hanging around with the youngsters after hours instead of training himself in his profession by taking courses at the university; you all know the sort of chap—and he managed adroitly to have one of the great masters of the game drop in to watch the boys at work. Well, in one glance the great master of baseball—I shall name no names, but twenty million fans would recognize him instantly—proclaimed that the thirteen-year-older holding down second base had the rare creative gift of the born player!

"Notice the way he sways," he said, "gently to and fro as he vibrates with the batter. He is therefore always balanced just right. As the batter swings, he senses whether that ball is going to be hit; and as it cracks on the bat his ear tells him where it is going to land. His rhythm is so timed that he has started in advance toward the right spot. And he collects that ball with a motion that carries right into the throw to first, so that no energy is lost. Look at the way he automatically rights himself from the pick-up so that he is braced to make the throw without the needless loss of a second!"

As nearly as I can recall it, that is the gist of the observations of the master player. Five years later that lad played in a world's series on the team of the master player—he has a reputation for picking them young—and the bov has since added other world's series experience to that.

Now the young teacher who was so persistent in bothering us about the creative possibilities in this boy was at that moment exhibiting his own creative genius, but I am sure that neither he nor any of us gave that a thought. Problem children and the inadequate social organization that makes them a problem have since been his life study; he is the author of authoritative works on these subjects, quoted and respected the world over; and he is now the chief administrative officer of one of the important national organizations for studying and remedying the social conditions that prevent the fullest child development.

He was my best friend on that early staff of teachers. Before that, let me go a step further, he had been a pupil in the first class I ever taught; it was there that our lifelong friendly relation began, but I did not know enough at any time to give him a decent direction to guide him in life. Humbly I list him also among my failures.

The discerning person who senses the gifted ones is rare, but that should be of great encouragement to the boys and girls who are now facing their mysterious adult future. I do not mean to imply by these incidents that every boy or girl who does not find an interest in his lessons is a predestined success. Nor am I scolding conscientious teachers for trying to instill into their classes some smatterings of disciplined knowledge. The great truth for both teachers and students to realize is this: A gift exists in each one of us, some sort of gift; but we must find it for ourselves. And we must refuse to be discouraged by the depressing prophecies of some of our elders. There is just a chance that they might not be so "discerning" as they think they are—a theory I shall try to make clearer in another story of a youngster who persisted against odds in preserving his unique faith in himself.

Chapter XV

CREATIVE BUSINESS

For years I had been teaching the usual things in the usual way. After an extended experience in both elementary and high-school grades I believed I knew pretty much all there was to know about boys and girls. Good boys and girls, I reasoned, were those who studied the lessons I assigned to be done; bad boys and girls, of course, were the young rascals who did not bother about my lessons at all but went off on their own hook. Well, the good ones got my smiles and my fine marks, and the others got what's what. But eventually I nearly always found myself liking the rascals.

My regeneration was beginning when a certain sinner took my eye one day because he looked so contentedly stupid. Stupid as a cow, I thought as I watched him. His worried father had just been to see me. I had already talked with his worried mother. The boy had failed in most subjects and could give no adequate reason for it. The parents were a much distressed pair, but the boy was seemingly unconcerned.

The mother had asked me, I recall, "Do you think he has lost his wits?" My own thought was that one had first to have wits before losing them. But I did not express this idea to the mother. I had already learned that one does not say such things to mothers.

As I watched him on one particular day when the class was engaged in a writing job, I noted that he had sat without stirring for nearly an hour. Of course I should have called him to task, but I did not; I could think of nothing adequate or useful to say to him. So, "Ox," I said to myself. "Too stupid even to move!"

Still I liked the lad. "Ox," I may have said to myself, but I grinned at him pleasantly when finally he did stir slightly and glanced in my direction. He did not grin back, however, a fact that gave me a creepy feeling; there was not a spark of answering light in his eye; he remained as stolid and lifeless as a fish head.

At the time I thought it merely another evidence of stupidity; but later I learned the cause of it all, and it was far from stupidity. For months that boy had been absorbed with a great idea; it had taken literally all of his mind; for want of a better name I have always called it "Creative Business," for it had to do with buying on an unprecedented scale and selling at a rate so low as to seem silly, but since that time several famous American fortunes have been made in exactly that way, this lad's among them.

The idea had spread in his mind until it took up all his thinking time. Lessons dwindled in importance. The idea required a tremendous amount of concentration, for problems came up every day, and the solution of even a part of one of them demanded, sometimes, the hard thinking of several weeks. Often a seemingly unsolved bit would be put aside while other unfinished matters were passed in review; and the mere vacation from the difficult phase would be enough to make the solution easy and simple at the next attempt. In some instances complexities that had remained a tangle for days were cleared up in a flash, as if an outside source, like an inspiration, had sent a distinct message. All this I learned from him many years later.

Now while this highly intellectual process was going on in his brain the boy was outwardly a wooden image. Teachers did most of the talking in that school, fortunately for "creative business," so the classrooms were not at all bad places for the exercise of his type of mind; but these same teachers had a disturbing habit of stopping now and then to stir things up with questions. In the midst of a problem of vast buying that meant negotiating with the copper miners of New Mexico and the toy workers of Bohemia, which included problems of customs, transportation, assembling, and distribution, our lad would be suddenly assailed with such irrelevant questions as, "Who followed Tiglath-Pileser as ruler of Assyria?" or "Perhaps, William, you can give us now the typical case-endings of a third declension i-stem?"

I remember once trying to help him when he was leaning forward and looking straight at me with a startling appearance of interest in what I was doing with that class, "William," I said, "have you ever really written anything with interest, anything outside of a school assignment, a letter or a story or a poem, something that you wanted to do for yourself?"

He continued to stare at me without a tremor of a movement. I repeated the question, but it was only the second laugh of the class that brought him out of the clouds.

He stood up to take his punishment; the light went out of his eyes; a stooping dullness crept over him; the whole picture was that of the typical class fool. It took some pedagogical persuasion to keep that merry mob from baiting him.

"I didn't hear the question," he mumbled. As he always reported the same formula, the class whooped their approval of the lark.

Again I gave him the question, trying by a genial tone to put him at ease, "Have you ever written anything, William, because you really wanted to do it yourself? Something that honestly absorbed your interest?"

"Yes, sir," he said stolidly.

"What was it about?" I asked gently.

"Copy of the price of oils, paints, and varnishes in tank-load and hogshead lots," he answered.

Even William joined eventually in the merriment that followed that answer.

He went up in everybody's estimation after that; we all put him down for a humorist, but even there we were wrong. That copy had been done by stealth from the secret memoranda of a corporation that had made its millions through preferential rates both in costs of raw materials and in transportation. A friend, a boy clerk, had permitted William to get it during a lunch period, every minute of which had been filled with excitement, for discovery would have meant instant discharge for his friend and possible legal trouble for William.

Naturally this information was not given to us during the class session. William sat down without further word, satisfied, it seemed, with his abrupt promotion from class fool to class funny-man.

II

A few weeks later he told his parents that he had a job. It was in the basement of one of a nationally known series of chain stores. When asked what he would get for his services he returned a characteristic answer that he had not inquired, but that he thought it couldn't be more than four dollars a week.

Just everything that boy did seemed to point to a meager mental equipment.

In school he dreamed but did not study, but in business he studied and ceased dreaming. His mastery of every operation within his humble field and his terrific drive at the tasks assigned brought results instantly. The school knows its scholars and grades them, but business knows its bright boys, too, and the grading takes the stimulating form of bigger jobs and more pay in the envelope. From the basement of one of these stores William started up until he was manager of a string of them.

It was later that I became interested in the mystery of the creative life and particularly in the sources of creative effort. Everyone else seems to have that interest, too. "Where do you get all of your ideas?" they always ask when they meet the author of a book. I knew enough not to ask William that fool question. No one knows where ideas come from. But sometimes we may tell what started them.

Let me illustrate this a little further before I give William's answer. The commonest question asked the story writer is about the originals of his characters. Most of the readers seem to think that these are careful portraits of friends and acquaintances with only the names and addresses changed. Now that would be no fun for the writer; it would take a deal of trouble to do that sort of job; and I am quite certain that it would be no fun for his friends and acquaintances!

The fact is that the writer cannot do so well with persons he knows intimately; it is the chance acquaintance, the merely passing stranger often, who gives him his best material. But even then it is only a hint or a suggestion that he needs, something to stir up the mysterious forces of his creative self; the rest is pure invention.

A word said in the dark may start a complete novel; a gesture or a laugh of a passer-by may be the beginning of a strong story; a newspaper clipping may offer all that is needed for a tale of adventure. The author's pride, remember, is not for the sources of his invention but for the invention itself.

I might say in passing that so great is the public's belief that the fiction writer is engaged in a species of photography or accurate note-taking that it will not accept the truth from the author, so, finally, he ceases to tell them the truth about the matter. Either he remains silent or he invents "whoppers" just to see them gasp. The public does not respect the creature that the artist makes out of his own mind-stuff or the image that he creates out of the absurdest materials of his experience; it is always seeking for the "original" who sat for the portrait. "That was his father," they will say knowingly in reference to Mr. Wells's *Mr. Polly*. Mr. Wells may have had a hint from the existence of his father, but "Mr. Polly" is pure creative artistry.

III

Writers and artists themselves, of course, understand all about this and will agree in private that the public doesn't know what it is talking about. Now, William, I maintain, was a creative artist. He knew about the mystery of his mind and he respected it; and he knew exactly what had started him off in the career that brought him fortune and happiness.

It was a bit of a conversation he had overheard while waiting with his father to buy a pair of shoes. Two well-dressed men of the clerical type had mentioned several instances of the vast margin of difference between the wholesale price of most commodities of popular usage and the price paid eventually by the consumer; and they had advanced the theory that fortune was awaiting the men who would buy in quantity and dare to sell far below the present market. They gave vivid concrete examples of organizations that had discovered the gold mine which lay hidden in just that procedure.

From that time on, his mind set itself to the problems involved; he read everything that touched on prices and distribution; in imagination he lived the fairy life of one who controlled every step in a given production from raw material to the customer's check, and, naturally, the life of school books became faded and dull.

All the essentials of the plan that he pursued successfully, including employment in the basement of one of the chain stores, were worked out in the dazed dream-world he inhabited during his last year at school. Nearly all the problems he had confronted in those long hours of vivid thinking were, he has assured me, the problems he met again in actual business; and the solutions of his serious dreaming were practically the roads out that common sense later dictated.

IV

There are two sorts of men in business, salaried persons and creative persons. William belonged to the kind who disdain the routine that leads to a safe if small wage; he was the inventor type who turns old accepted things into strange new things.

He had the fierce absorption of the artist when in the act of creating the new out of the old; and at such times he might easily risk the charge of stupidity, but, in the long run, he becomes the wise man to whom all go for advice, whose very name among his own group is a symbol of superior intellect. And those of his earlier mates who used to laugh at him when boys together are the ones who, in their hour off for lunch, strut about in the pride of their iterated announcement, "Yes, I used to go to school with him! Yes, sir! Knew him just as well as I know my hat. Yes, sir!"

Chapter XVI

DUMPPIDDYFETCHETS

IN THE late teens there is often a tremendous blocking of creative expression when the desire to talk of one's personal affairs meets the frustrating fear of exposure.

Mothers wonder what *is* the matter with their young-woman daughters; teachers sometimes report dull indifference to lessons, or stubbornness, or outright displays of irritability. No one seems to be able to guess—and yet we have all gone through it!—that it is simply the natural period of absorption in oneself, and that confession, or at least an outpouring of some sort in talk, is imperative.

What am I worth? What is going to happen to me? What should I do with my life? There are some of the questions which cannot be answered without outside help. Sometimes there may be more depressing questions, dangerously so, such as, Am I no good, as everybody seems to believe? Is there any hope for me at all in this great, selfish stampede to get somewhere in life? What's the use of living anyway?

When this natural and healthy stage is explained to mothers or to teachers they are usually both puzzled and hurt. "Why couldn't she have come to me?" they ask pathetically; or, "My boy surely knows that I would understand and sympathize!"

Mothers and dear friends will not always do. It is not a question of affection or of sympathetic understanding. My own guess is that the young person wants to talk this out and prefers someone he will never see again; it is the talk that is important, and even that he wishes to forget afterward. A friend might easily become an uncomfortable reminder of a moment of weakness.

One of the devices to secure relief is to write to a complete stranger, but it must be someone who has shown a public interest in the affairs of youth, the pastor of a distant church, for instance, or the author of a book.

Here are extracts from two such letters pertinent to this study of manifestations of the creative life: one is from a boy who is depressed because of the possession of an irrepressible native gift; the other is from a girl who finds the traditional course of study not fitted to her creative needs. A reply is presented immediately after each letter.

Only two letters are given here, but they will illustrate the contrasting character of the problems for which no answer is supplied by near-by friendly agencies. A volume could be filled with types of this sincere attempt of older youth to understand themselves in relation to the world in which they find themselves.

While many of such letters fall into easily classified groups, the variety of needs is a continual surprise. They range from the urge of a girl to prepare herself for a man's job, the management of a steamship line (her father is a sea captain), to the desire of a boy to save his parents from a separation toward which he sees all too clearly that they are drifting.

The outstanding fact is that thinking youth is everywhere leading a serious, and sometimes tragic, concealed life with which the machinery of school and home has not prepared itself to deal.

No one seems to believe this. Mothers, teachers, and best friends are particularly insensitive to its existence. They continue to pass summary judgments on clumsy or silent young persons, often exhibiting the crude taste of a public remark. Here is an exact speech, taken down on the spot. It was spoken with friendliness and nice humor, to be sure, but it was ignorantly cruel: "Marie is getting to be *such* a dear moody Dumppiddyfetchet, always *reading* and never being silly and sociable like the *rest* of us. *Aren't* you, dearie!

Come, draw your chair up *into* the circle, dearie! Don't hang back and be a Dumppiddyfetchet!"

The general picture I retain from such letters as have come to me bears no resemblance to a Dumppiddyfetchet. To me these young persons are gay, alert, keen-witted. They toss formalism aside, always an act of intelligence and social assurance; their company gaucherie is completely gone; the hidden creative life steps forth, a marvelously expressive thing. With jest they often own up to their everyday mask; but as they know that no one will believe that they can be capable of thinking, they invariably beg that their identity shall never be disclosed.

Anyone who takes the trouble to acquire the technique of reaching into the secret creative life of these older youth will find something of great human value. The first step is clear: one must believe in it; one must believe that everyone possesses it, even the seemingly stupid; and particularly one must believe that it is most powerful and worthy among those same inarticulate Dumppiddyfetchets.

However, this is no job for Paul Pry. Here again I must say a most disagreeable thing, but I know that this book will do incalculable harm if it seemingly gives sanction to those who are continually pressing, uninvited and unwanted, into the privacy of the lives of the young. I am thinking mainly of a type, really repulsive to youth, who seek a personal recompense, no doubt, in aggressive prying. The worst cases are, of course, psychopathic, but an easy diagnosis may be made by those who know the commonest conduct-stigmata: a talking on "morals" in public and in private that amounts to a complex; a constant bidding for friendship with boys and girls; a persistent begging for private interviews or for letters of an intimate and personal nature. The interviews will invariably bring forth an outright request for confessions of social or moral lapses. He is dangerous when in position of authority over children or when he has won the support of groups of parents.

In the Army these saintly snoopers would prowl around all hours of the night in the hope of catching a lad in some violation of law and order, when they would creep up to him and try to engage his confidence with a soft, "What would your sister say, my son, if she saw you now!" A boy in an Army rest-hut taps idly with one finger on the piano; one of these creatures steals up behind him, places a trembling, humid arm about him and whispers, "Ah, the old, familiar tunes! Thinking of home, my boy? Come, let us go now and pour out our souls in a letter to that dear loving mother!" I have seen the thing often enough; but the words above are taken from the public confessions of these men made in pride after the war. The boys in both the American and the British armies held this sort of pushing confidant in great contempt.

II

Robert S., of Illinois, writes:

I'm always getting sent out of the room. The teacher says I try to be smart, and I say I'm smart without trying, and then we fight; at least he does, for I always laugh and say something that gets him riled and then I park in the principal's office. If he'd only laugh like the others do, he'd be better off, because I like his work and do my best in it and I'd rather stay in the room.

Sometimes I resolve to keep quiet, but something is always happening and I forget. It just bubbles up, especially when I am feeling good. Maybe you know how it is when you're feeling good.

I was polite as I could be when I picked up a mistake in addition which he had made on the blackboard and he said, "I *think*, maybe, I've made an error here." And I said, "I *know*, may be, you have!" He was nice about that, although he scared me for a minute. Then I showed him a new way to do the problem and he got sarcastic and said, "I suppose you'll be a teacher yourself some day." And I said, "Oh, may be, if I can't get a regular job." Bing! I was trotting off to the office again.

He's a good sport sometimes, though. He does make mistakes, and one time he said, "Robert, you're not half bad at math," and I said, "You're only quarter bad yourself." He took that all right. And he laughed when he was giving his favorite do-it-in-your-head problems. He was saying, "He made eight yards but reversed and went a quarter of the distance back, was tackled and dropped the ball, which went back six yards when he recovered and was then——" "Fullback," I said, and everybody laughed and so did he.

Maybe this is just being smart. I don't know. But one thing I do know and that is that I never have to *try* to be.

Just the same, I feel rotten most of the time about it.

Harold's case will interest you. He is a distinguished man now, but I knew him when he was a boy like you.

Invariably, whenever I talk with the men and women whom I knew as children, I find abundant proof that they have made their successes out of something they always had. And it has these three qualities: it was something they enjoyed, something they did easily, something that everybody else thought silly. Even they themselves thought it silly; so a fourth should be added—they did not know its real value and suspected that it had none.

When Harold was a lad of your age he punned and twisted words about in a ridiculous fashion. He was a terrible nuisance. It was impossible to discuss anything seriously in his presence. If a history book belonged to a girl he would call it a *her*-sterry—I am giving his pronunciation—while he would dub his own book a *my*-sterry book. He would say, "I left my *my*-sterry at home; will you lend me your *your*-sterry and you look off Jack's *his*-sterry?" Or, "If you misspell 'misspelling' so that it is 'mispelling'" pointing to the word as he had written it, "would it still be 'misspelling'?" Or, to a chap who had grabbed something selfishly, "You'd get high marks in p-i-g-ography."

A long-winded speaker addressed the school one day on "The Seven Wonders of the World." The bells rang for dismissal, but he heeded them not. He went on. And on. Teachers stood up, back to the speaker, and glared to keep the restless youngsters quiet and polite. The speaker went on. Finally, he said, "Now, children, I've told you of the Seven Wonders of the World. What will the eighth wonder be? What little boy or girl will tell me?" Harold's hand went up. "I wonder when we're goin' to git out," he said.

Naturally he was often sitting on the anxious bench in the principal's office. At these times he was a most scared small person. As a rule the principal would take pity upon the frightened youngster and let him off; but there came one afternoon when the boss's heart hardened and he resolved to cure the lad once and for all; and, remember, it was in the days when that meant twenty smart whacks from a rattan switch.

"What were you sent down here for?" the principal asked swiftly. "More impertinence, I presume."

"Yes, sir." The white face looked up, honest and game.

The principal softened at the frank reply. "What was it?" he asked more gently.

"She said—I'd made her mad at sumpin'—she said, madder an' louder, 'What would you say if I sent you down to the principal?' an'"—grinning and lowering his gaze but still trembling—"an' I said I'd say——"

"Well," kindly, "what did you say you'd say?"

"I said I'd say, 'Well, I'll be switched!' an' that made everybody laugh, an' so—she sent me down."

The two grinned at each other. Finally the principal said, "Well, you will be switched—the very next time I hear of your making remarks like that. You've got to control this funny way of talking back that sets the class laughing and disturbs the teacher or out you go. If you can't work with me you can't work for me. Do you understand what that means?"

Some blood began to steal back into the boy's face; it had been a narrow escape from a real terror. "Yes, sir," he smiled up in grateful friendliness, "if I don't shut up you'll shut down."

Nowadays when certain big executives want a difficult deal put over before a conference or even before a legislature or a Congressional committee, they send Harold in. I presume his plans are no better than any other person's; for the most part he is simply using the ideas of other men in the business; but his gift of repartee and his funny twist of phrase send a warmth through any meeting that simply melts opposition. He has the vote wavering in his favor before he begins to put over the proposal; he has a way of seasoning the most solemn business propositions to make them appetizing. And as an after-dinner speaker he is a rare delight. Committees contend for his services at their banquets, and I have known times when they have offered many hundreds of dollars for one of his witty addresses.

Robert S., of Illinois, you may have a great natural ability, the power to turn the highly artificial thing called language into instant use for attack and defense; back of that is always a special type of active brain; to have humor with it adds enormously to the gift. This sort of thing is rare and therefore men pay high for it.

Its dangers are obvious. It must never lose its keen edge of healthy and harmless humor. If it cuts too deep, the world will have none of it. One of my best friends had this gift, but while he rose high, he began to use it with bitterness, and he failed. His friends even began to avoid him, for they were always nervously aware that they might at any time be made the target for one of his astonishing shafts. I recall how he introduced the chief guest at a dinner, a thrifty rich man, one notoriously careful to count his change, who had just returned from Europe: "The only speaker of the evening," he said, "is our honored guest, who will address us on 'How I Went to Europe with One Sovereign and One Shirt and Did Not Change Either.'"

We all agreed years later that that dinner marked the end my friend's career.

Your gift, Robert S., may bring you in hundreds of dollars a performance; and it may thwart you at every turn that leads forward.

But do not let anyone persuade you that it is not a powerful and rich personal possession.

III

F. V. B., of Massachusetts, writes:

I have just written you an eight-page letter and torn it up. For your sake I shall be concise and personal.

I go to school for five and one-half hours each day. Outside I study approximately two. The powers that be at school have told us that in order to pass our College Board examinations we must do extra supervised work of two hours a day. All right! Morning, afternoon and night all filled up. Lovely! But what about the other things?

In order to go to college, I must give up all else, have no leisure to "find myself," and devote my time and faculties to studies, some of which I care nothing about. Is college worth it to me?

They tell us these are the formative years; the indecisive years; the years in which we must ponder; the years on which so much of our future life depends. And then they make out a curriculum which we must follow and leave us no time in which to explore those branches which promise a career.

I love to sing, but if I prepare for college, I have no time to study singing. I love and long to cover reams of paper with startling and original thought, but—I have no time!

In regard to all this—for me—don't you think a special course in one line, even an interesting working position after I am graduated from high school, would be more valuable than college?

I think I am not lazy. Please understand. I want to follow the course that will profit me the most in character and happiness in the end.

This letter is hard to answer. The usual return for such frank questions as these is an evasive set of generalizations, for adults are afraid to speak the truth to youth; from the earliest Santa Claus days they have tossed their young a series of safe myths to meet each cry of intelligent hunger. A truthful reply is sure to be misunderstood, they argue; it may even be the means of driving some youth to wrong decisions;

it will arouse indignation among certain types of unthinking adults. I propose in my answer to take all those risks.

Let us get rid of a few uncomfortable facts first. The traditional aim of the college is to make scholars, learned persons. History is there presented with the plan of making one a historian or at least a professor of history. College chemistry is organized to fit one to be a professional chemist. The object of the course in literature is to equip one with a scholarly knowledge, historical and critical, of the whole range of the literary output. And so on.

As a student curious of human ways I may wish to grasp the significance of differential calculus. What is it about? I may ask. What does it do? To discover answers to these simple questions I must take the whole course; but the course aims to make me something I have no desire to be, namely, a "differential calculist," an expert technician, a scholar, and a learned man in the subject. Trigonometry, for instance, has unfolded fascinating things to me concerning the cleverness of the human mind; with it I see how man can measure inaccessible land, can spot the location of a hidden submarine, can gauge the distance of faraway stars; but to gather this fascination I had to take a technician's course in trigonometry.

The college staff is made up of scholars; they see, marvelously but narrowly, the view of the scholar. To question the validity of scholarship as the sole way to education is to stir their indignation and their contempt. (Exceptions will be noted later.) One might tell them that there are other ways of organizing human knowledge than that which they have learned so toilsomely; that only a few of their students ever become scholars; that those few are quite enough for the world's need of learned men; that scholarship is not wisdom; that life is more than scholarship. To tell them this is to end all further chance of discussion with them. They turn away as from something unclean. They will discuss religion with you in a fair and delightfully liberal spirit; but they allow no word that would limit the monopoly of scholarship to the Way of Life.

Of course, as you might guess, the great scholars are not of this type. I could quote you book and page for their entire agreement with all the abhorrent inferences suggested above; and they offer a hearty welcome to the proposal that the college should give equal opportunity for education to those who do not elect scholarship as a career. A most encouraging book on this theme is James Harvey Robinson's *The Humanizing of Education;* so is Everett Dean Martin's *The Meaning of a Liberal Education*, named by the American Library Association in its annual list of the Forty Best Books.

Another uncomfortable fact is that good scholarship and good teaching do not necessarily go together. Santayana, a scholar and a wise man, once said to me, "There is no necessary relationship between teaching and scholarship; in fact, there is opposition. A sensitive scholar is often hurt by the impertinent demand that he also instruct the immature. Scholars teach mainly because scholarship is not endowed." Worse, they may hate teaching and go to it with loathing. Worst, they may not be scholars at all but merely pretenders who hear recitations from textbooks, who lecture, for instance, on what Wendell and Gardiner discovered at Harvard over thirty years ago, and add nothing to the world's thinking—nor to their own. These gentleman may even love teaching but dislike students. This type also includes some indubitable ladies.

The complete picture of college, however, is pleasanter than this crude sketch of some of its harsher outlines. A great multitude of young people have lately come down upon the college and have almost taken possession of it. Only a few of these are aiming to make scholarship a life work. Some of the others have a different use for their life and they are intelligent and critical. They are making demands. The colleges, perforce, are changing to meet the problem of these earnest invaders.*

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*The first of these expressions of the point of view of college students came in the famous Dartmouth Report of 1924 (*Report on Undergraduate Education of the Dartmouth College Senior Committee*) which was followed two years later by the

The long fight for the liberalizing of education, which began with the introduction of the kindergarten, has now reached the higher learning. The air is full of the debate on the changing college. In time all our dreams will come true, but, meanwhile, F. B. V. of Massachusetts, you wait for an immediate answer.

Well, what of you, and the likes of you, who turn to the creative life for your solace and for the final expression of yourself in the community? At the start, as you so clearly see, you face a conflict. The creative life is spun from within; the scholar's life is built of outside materials. You are the artist type, and the artist has never fared comfortably in the schools of scholarship; so, if you are an artist, as I presume you are, college has little to offer, and that little must be won at a great sacrifice. The commonest tale I hear from creative artists of repute is of their bitter struggle against the prejudices of college scholarship.

To be fair, however, I must admit that if you can live the scholar's life for the four years of college, without too much sense of frustration, you will be able to extract something of great value from it, though you may never be scholar again. There is no space to enlarge upon this; so I state it dogmatically as a sure truth: even for the artist this temporary life of the scholar may not be wholly waste. No one who sniffs at scholarship because it makes unpleasant demands upon his mental powers is likely to be heard from in the world of art.

But to you and your sort I say generally: (1) If you must

Report of the Harvard Student Council Committee on Education. Within a year Wesleyan, Nebraska, Oregon, and Perdue were in the field with student reports, and others followed. The more far-seeing college authorities welcomed and encouraged these manifestations of undergraduate thinking. A fine illustration of this type of administrative officer is discoverable, for instance, in the addresses delivered before the Harvard Teachers Association, republished in *School and Society* May 5, 12, 1928, particularly "The Student Council and the Dean," by Chester N. Greenough of Harvard College; "Learning and the Free Spirit," by Raymond Walters, Dean of Swarthmore College; "The Effect of College on the Student's Mind," by J. Edgar Park, President of Wheaten College; and "An Adventure in Common Sense Education," by Hamilton Holt, President of Rollins College.

go to the scholar's college, choose one that does not exact the further sacrifice of years spent preparing for College Board examinations. (2) Choose one that is friendly to the artist type, and that is open-minded enough to experiment with ways and means for furthering a creative attitude toward life. (3) Better, rather, select a music college or art college, the one that comes closest to your creative gifts. (4) Refuse to follow the crowd to any college, whether it is the social crowd or the athletic crowd. (5) Send for catalogues everywhere. Inquire of those who have been here and there. Search day and night for information concerning colleges which hold the newer faith: that while scholarship may be the proper goal for some, for others the way to wisdom and enlarged living may come through a broad cultivation of spiritual and creative powers. Would there were more of them!

Chapter XVII

MOTHERS AND FATHERS

ONE child, I am willing to admit, is about all I could stand. I look with awe upon cheerful parents who gather their group of four and five about them. How do they manage to live through it? Mothers might stick it out somehow, I reason, because to them have been given some miraculous special powers, but how about the fathers? It's terribly hard on fathers.

Oh, I am not referring to the usual things that one thinks of; children are no particular trouble, bother, or annoyance to fathers. Men have managed sawmills and blast furnaces, and they have a good record for battles even. It is the steady wear and tear on one's affections that knock fathers out. The moment after the father has received the bundle from the nurse and has weighed it on the kitchen scales and has found it the most appropriate possession of his life he is a captured creature due for a twenty-year term of daily strain and baffled endeavor. And there is nothing off for good behavior.

He will never be the same again, and he will not want to be. Life begins really to have purpose for him when he takes on ownership in one of these mysteries called children. That is what Shaw meant to imply when he made his so-called extravagant statement that no teacher should be considered qualified until she had, somehow, managed to have a child. There is no state of greater ignorance than childlessness.

The suggestion of illness in his own is enough to put father on the edge of a breakdown, but, at the same time, it racks him with an enforced will to live. A plaintively expressed wish, and he would, if permitted, buy a half interest in a toy shop. He is savage in his desire to obliterate other people's unsympathetic children. And that teacher is incompetent and a fraud who grades his child lower than A plus. The psychiatrists, who are coming into everybody's life nowadays, have doubtless already named it. *Dementia parentis* probably. It is all of that.

In the family life the father is aiming, with every secret and deceptive move, to preserve the child as it was originally given to him. He fights the encroaching necessities of living in an economic and coercive civilization, siding with the child in every campaign against mother, aunt, teacher, neighbor, preacher, policeman; against punctuality, early bedding, and table manners; against drugs (but not sundaes), uncrossed legs, and diets.

About the mothers' particular dementia I do not know from experience, but I have a clear notion of it from the outside. Theirs is at basis, I take it, a conservative's job. They are fashioning the child for a definite future. Sometimes they work with the instinct of a bird mud-molding its first nest; sometimes they display clear thinking like a hen dropping its one hundredth egg. From their viewpoint the child as it was first given to them is at its least satisfactory stage. And the next less satisfactory stage is whatever one the child happens to be in at the given moment.

Here one sees without further development of the theme the formula for understanding what is inevitably and irredeemably wrong with most marriages. The successful matings are those that come about through daily compromise based upon a high philosophic comprehension of the necessary contradiction of opposites.

And the whole matter is complicated in that sometimes the mother and father position is reversed; sometimes (when it is a boy child) the father tries unnaturally to be a mother, and sometimes, often, alas, the mother succeeds in usurping both rôles.

A fellow-father tells me of that time in his parenthood, for which he was wholly unprepared, when his baby girl appeared suddenly before him with a satisfied smirk and introduced her first "young man." It is a terrible moment for fathers; no wonder, then, that he remained during the interview a damp, pudgy, thick-minded inconsolable. If he had had a day or two to think it over he might have got used to the situation, at least enough to show a sporting interest in this reminder of his own complete annihilation.

After the dull interview he rushed to the back veranda for air, only to overhear from the hammock, amid semi-suppressed amusement, this silly sing-song conversation:

HE: Father doesn't *like* me. (*Laughter.*)
SHE: I *know.* (*Laughter.*)
HE: The old bird's a *wise* old owl. (*Laughter.*)
SHE: And *still* thinks he's sitting on the egg! (*Laughter.*)

Now, as a father, I hasten to say, I am a useless person to ask for advice or for true observation of the facts of childhood. As a father my prejudices are unshakably instinctive. Mine not to reason why, mine to fight for my conception of the rights of my own and daily die. But, fortunately or not, I am not the father of other people's children. Them I can look upon without even the suggestion of daily dying; them I can observe and coolly prescribe for and without the trembling of a single limb.

So dropping the rôle of father for the moment, I note that children, other persons' children, have their own prejudices about the way of life. My observation is that they neither desire to be what they formerly were nor what others are so courageously shaping them to be. They are concerned enormously with being themselves and with living always in the exact present time. And as time has a way of moving on they prefer not to oppose it but to move along with it. They seem to be quite aware, too, that even without our hovering insistence they would grow up and at the predestined hour would put on all the accepted characteristics of maturity.

But no child, I fancy, has ever had this delectable desire realized. The contrary paternal and maternal forces—to keep him the way he used to be and to make him into something else—are ever at work, and in the end he becomes a defeated compromise. Only the dream remains, which crops out in story, poem, and picture, that dream which is so compellingly put in *The House Without Windows and Eepersip's Life There*, by the nine-year-old Barbara Newhall Follett, published by Knopf. *Emile*, too, is just such a dream.

II

Pressure molds us into what we are, and it begins soon after birth. Psychiatrists have given us a handy name for the process by which the social environment puts its eventual stamp upon us. "Introjection" they call it. All of us are the victims of introjection. What we might have been we never can know; the family "introjects" us, and we talk and walk and think like the family, fight for its absurd "political" beliefs, take over its prejudices against this or that "class" or race, bow before its traditional gods; the already "introjected" children of our earliest acquaintance turn swiftly upon us to advance the job, and school and then society complete it.

All this may be as it should be, but it is at least amusing to think that possibly we have never seen a natural "unintrojected" child; and that, if this is true, then parents and teachers, whose business it is to know all about children, cannot possibly know anything about them. One cannot speak intelligently about something one has never seen. "Nonsense," I hear you say; "I was a child myself, and I guess I know something about the animal." But were you ever a child? Perhaps you were merely an introjection.

Some glimpses of the real child, however, have been seen in this our day. It has come about partly because of the slow change in the kind of introjecting environment which the family and the school had hitherto set up around the child. Some of the nagging pressure has been removed, and, naturally, a new kind of child was bound to emerge. And, further, a new kind of parent and teacher has appeared, one who has sought out the real child and has given it a chance.

III

But before I go into that I should like to ask a question of those who think they know children, or, rather, of those who believe that the child they see is a natural creature and not the resultant of surrounding and compelling forces. Do you believe that the normal picture of a large group of six-year-olds at play is that of a noisy, darting, selfish, shrill-voiced mob; that they do little reasoning; that their language is on a low plane; that they have little sense of what is really fine or beautiful?

Well, that is the exact picture of the introjected child and not the real child at all. Placed in an environment of hysteria and selfish grabbing and nervous rushing about, he becomes that child which we all know so well; but I could tell you of thoughtful parents and teachers who have made another environment for their children where all the social expectations contradict those listed above.

In such an environment I have seen four- and five-year-old children move with the deliberate pace of older persons; the hum of work has pervaded their group, with nothing of what even a sensitive elder could call noise; the voice tones have been low and the speech calm; there would be no nervous darting about or that nervous fear of the neighbor which leads to grabbing and hoarding of property.

More startling than this is the evidence of quiet, long-planned reasoning, not different in essential character from our own except that it seems more rational and less a clacking of repeated prejudices. Some evidence of this you will find in *Before Books*, a year's record of a group of four-year-olds, and *Adventuring with the Twelve Year Olds*, in *Experimental Practice* (a record of seven-year-olds), and *Eight Year Old Merchants*, all publications of The City and Country School, New York City. *Children in the Nursery School* by Harriet M. Johnson is crowded with new information about the early years of the new child. (John Day, New York.)

Let me take you to an audience of high-school teachers in a small city far from the currents of fresh thinking. A speaker is telling them of the hopeful new vision of a self-reliant and resourceful youth. They listen politely but are not moved. Among the rigid women are a few eager faces. The men have captured the rear seats; they sprawl and look at the floor or face sideways in bored profile; old, most of them, worn but wiry. They hear of the high-school boy or girl who really thinks; studies hard for the love of a far-off and difficult result; speaks a free, warm language; has respect for fine things; turns out a written phrase that is the wonder and the delight of our best men and women. They are still not moved. They know high-school boys and girls. They know how to keep them on the job, how to insure the suppression of mischievous personalities, how to prevent a single exercise in the native language.

I am wondering why these tired and unconvinced souls come to such meetings; then I see one of their number standing at the door with rollbook checking off the late comers. They have been dismissed from school to attend a "teachers' meeting"; they will not get their small pay for the day if they do not bring their reluctant bodies through that door. All day they have been talked to. Three speakers in the morning; two in the afternoon. Horrible!

Relief comes with a thirty-minute play by pupils of the junior high school. They wake up, these stolid women and heavy men. At the conclusion they applaud earnestly. "That was good!" they say, and settle back to endure another speaker.

I watch the play. It is not good. It is very bad. Long memorizations of impossible adult speeches meant to be read silently, perhaps, but never to be delivered as dramatic dialogue. For instance:

A girl, wearing a broad band upon which is printed the legend "INDUSTRY," shouts: "I am the spirit of work. In the many and various occupations of modern civilization"—her face is set in solemn fear; her eyes seem to look terrified within; her whole mind is upon the words, therefore not a shred of personal meaning is given to the shrill, singsong speech—"of which this city boasts sixty-four per cent. of the skilled employment of the state, Industry, which I and my five attendants"—a sudden jerky wave of the hand to the back of the stage, where six boys and girls stand in scared attention—"represent, will speak to you and show you what we can do. My attendants, come forth!"

They come forth with a sudden and sweaty determination and shout their awful lines—I have taken my notes from the actual text of the play—one little fellow beginning, "I am the miner who digs the coal and keeps the wheels of industry moving." Business of picking with an imaginary tool at an imaginary ceiling. "I excavate three kinds of coal, anthracite, which is a hard coal and most prized for the heating of dwellings; bituminous, which is a soft coal and is used for industries; and cannel coal, which is between a hard and a soft coal and is used in hearths and grates." And so on as the five other attendants declaim the faultless facts.

Then the miner says, with a gulp, as one might announce one's immediate suicide, "We will now dance, to show that the best workman is a happy workman."

Oh, incredible and pitiful! Those ungainly children stepped and hopped and turned and humped themselves this way and that to the muffled airs of an off-stage phonograph. The faces were strained and terribly set upon the job. Workmen they indubitably were, but they were not happy. One lad gave the whole thing away by counting with every lunge. To all the world his moving lips proclaimed a steady, "One, two, three, four! One, two, three, four!"

It went on; other groups followed; without humor, without a single grace of healthy childhood. It was some other person's words, some other person's ideas; every gesture and step was controlled; it was a book lesson recited and danced.

The stupendous feat of memory—verbal and bodily—came to a close. The curtain went up unexpectedly, to respond to the applause, and surprised a half-dozen boys and girls on the stage. This was something they had not studied. Startled, they laughed healthily and rushed to get away. Entangled in the side curtains, they called to one another in great glee, tossed the impediment this way and that, and finally found each a way out. That was the single natural thing in the play and it was charming and really beautiful. Their bodies had taken lovely poses, especially the arms as they struggled with the long folds; their delightful faces were charming with mirth; their voices were tripping with fine tones of childhood; their running from one side to the other was full of abrupt rhythms. Undiscovered dramatic treasure!

I talked to the children afterward to see if they had any conception of the stupid artificiality of their enforced performance. They had none. Proud of their work they viewed themselves as dramatic successes. The teacher coach came forward wearily to receive congratulations. "We worked hard," she said. "No one will know how hard we worked."

For weeks that play moved before me: those strained, scared faces; the shrill, declamatory speeches; the solemn dances; the boy's lips announcing his "One, two, three, four." They had no notion of the dramatic power of their own speech, especially when impromptu; they would not believe that their own bodies could be naturally beautiful in movement; they would laugh at the thought that their own ideas about the world might be even more moving, and certainly more convincingly expressed, than the sweated essay of the teacher of industrial economics.

They would not believe that children of their own age had put on plays and operettas written and composed by themselves—often not written at all but made "on their feet" when moved by the dramatic stimulus of rehearsal—dramas which bore no evidence of the stilted language of adults; that such children had made and given dances fashioned to their own mood; and that every moment of rehearsal and of final performance had been a supreme delight. They could not believe; for it was a child which neither they nor their teachers had ever seen. It was a child with a different supervisory environment.

IV

Perhaps the most astonishing outcome of these new environments is the skill the children show in using their own language. All our lives we struggle to express our feeling and thinking appropriately in words. Without study and without striving these differently placed children equal us and sometimes outdo us. Once I showed an old-time English teacher a group of verses that some children of my acquaintance had tossed off without effort seemingly. He read them and passed them back. "It's a lie," he said. "I couldn't do that well myself."

When the child is allowed to appear as artist, a perfection in the handling of the medium makes us at first disbelieve that a child could perform so well—like the frank gentleman who summed the whole thing up as a lie—until continued experience gives us the essential faith. Words came forth with astonishing deftness; they place themselves together in a pattern that we have always been accustomed to call mature. And they rise sometimes to startling heights.

Helen Elizabeth at fourteen has a portfolio of manuscript which her mother has shown me; the contents seem astonishing until one realizes that her home environment has been just the traveled and literary sort that would make creative writing a natural outcome. She writes:

Give me a man with a pie-bald mind
  And a brindled love for roaming
And we will travel with the wind
  And never think of homing.

That man "with a pie-bald mind and brindled love for roaming" has been roving through my own pie-bald mind for the many months since I first read it. In granting the liberty of life to these young persons they repay by the most startling novelties. View, for example, her fearsome picture out of elf-land; the Queen's child pages have made a brave attempt to gather the lilies which Her Majesty has commanded but, daunted, they retreat to the safe shore, as one may readily understand after a threat like this:

SELFISHNESS

These are *my* lilies! You cannot go
Out to get them. I keep them so—

My golden mermaids will invite you!
My bigly blackish snakes will bite you!
My own quicksands will pull you down!
And I will laugh to see you drown!
Great bass bull-frogs will lullaby,
Soft pollywogs will slither by
Where your bodies lie!

You big sillies,
Go tell the Queen these are *my* lilies!

To show the wide range of their imaginative activity I could give you sonnet or ballad or song from Helen Elizabeth's varied store, but will restrict myself to

HIS EXCELLENCY'S MAKER OF PERIWIGS

Jane would walk (full-skirted disdain)
Down the cobbles of Hollyhock Lane.

Once she met the bespeckled man
With plebeian look of an artisan;

And though his buckled feet danced jigs
He made His Excellency's periwigs.

"And do you know," Jane winked her eye.
"The color of the sunset sky?"

"For that, my dear, a thousand figs!
For all I see are periwigs."

Miriam's mother has shown me another sheaf—again it is fourteen—one poem of which has given me a figure to stalk benignly beside all the great ladies and great gentlemen of the world. It is

THE QUEEN'S MASTER OF MAKE-UP

The Queen appears in all her loveliness
In the heavy perfumed court;
She is enveloped in the mist
Of Royalty that rounds the corners
Of the world and hides the ugliness:
A Queen's eyes must see only Beauty.

"The Master of Make-up!" says the page,
And entering the Queen's boudoir
Followed by pages bearing great caskets—
The Master of Make-up.
Before him he sees a woman;
An hour later he leaves a Queen.

The Master of Make-up sees the Queen,
The superb creation of his art,
Lady of blue-green mist garments
In the lourdeur of the court.

The Master of Make-up
Knows a peasant woman
Who wears the mask
And garments of a Queen,
But he is loyal, and is silent.

Again to show the multifarious character of their young minds I give you from Miriam's manuscripts a different picture and a different feeling:

AT SUNSET THEY CALLED ME

I look after you as you disappear in the darkness;
It is too late to try and follow.

I remember you when we walked together across the fields;
You walked quicker than I and waited every little while for me to catch up.
You often stopped to pick a flower,
But you soon tired of it and would toss it carelessly aside.

There were others who tried to amuse me with childish unrealities;
You told me things I could not quite understand.
Still, I thought about all you said, and sensed your meaning.
You said beauty was related to mind
As twilight to the harshly impersonal lucidity of day.
You said lives were trivial, ephemeral,
But life was real.

Recently you have talked little and kept alone.
Often I have seen you sitting beside the pond at night
Staring at the luminous water.
I have come close to you and called your name;
You have rarely heard me.
But once you turned suddenly and said,
"When you, too, are old, the moon's reflection will seem lovelier than the moon."

This morning you did not speak to me at all.
You touched my cheek—I could feel your hand trembling—
And kissed me. Then, clenching your hands, you walked out of the house.

They say you sat motionless in the meadow all day,
And at sunset you rose and started to walk westward.
Then they called me.

I am here now, but all I can see is a dim shape far off.
I look after you as you move into the misty shadows.

They slip into unheard-of language, these unfettered ones, which delights us because of its charming surprise, as witness this highly philosophical effort of a four-year-old:

EVERYTHING IS SOMETHING ELSE

O the towel and the bath,
And the bath and the soap,
And the soap was the fat,
And the fat was the pig,
And the pig was the bran,
And the bran makes sausages,
And man eats the sausages,
And God gets man.

The last illustration is taken from *Singing Youth*, Mabel Montsier's storehouse of children's verse. Others could be found in *Saplings*, two volumes of which have already been brought out by the Scholastic Publishing Company, Pittsburgh; or in those two anthologies of high-school verse, *Glimpses* and *Dawn*, edited by Paul S. Nickerson of Mittleboro, Massachusetts; or the earlier Perse School *Playbooks*, of which, *Homework and Hobbyhorses* and *The Playway* have been published in America. Other general collections are *Public School Verse*, a British anthology, published by Heinemann, the two volumes of *Best Creative Work in American High Schools*, edited by George H. Gallup, Iowa University, and the *Script Club*, with an introduction by Louis Untermeyer, published by Harcourt; and a hundred schools have brought out their own volumes, to mention any of which would be to name them all. If I needed other evidence I have only to reach to the floor of my room which is two feet thick with manuscripts sent me by parents and teachers and by the children themselves.

V

We began by talking about mothers and fathers. Well, we have not forgotten them, but have merely introduced the product of this unintrojected child—or, properly, a child with a different kind of introjection—for the purposes of illustrating a theory. And thus we dogmatically put it:

This new creative child, appearing for the first time on the stage of the world, will bring mother and father together. Each will compromise; one will give up trying to keep the child where he was and the other will cease pushing him forward to what he should be. They will be content, those who have been brought over to the new way, to let the child be—in both senses of that idiom—and to rejoice at the strong and delightful personality that day by day emerges.

The worry lifts from father, and it turns to rightful pride. No longer does he have to take a day off and fight it out with school mistresses; instead, he comes to the parent-teacher meetings and subscribes heavily toward the purchase of a new playground.

And in the home is peace. Gone is the secret warfare between two opposing theories of living. "Is marriage a failure?" In families who believe in the creative life the answer is no longer in the affirmative. Add, then, to the benefits of the newer education—startling thought!—a solution of one of the most important social questions in our monogamous civilization.

One should note, because of the strong attachment some persons have for definition, that introjection, in its strict psychiatric sense, is the act of seeing oneself the victim of social pressure. I have used it here as the conditioning force itself.

Chapter XVIII

ONE FOOD OF THE SPIRIT

READING, including the dramatization that goes with reading, silent or openly played, is one of the important foods of the creative life. It is rich in vitamines, the right sort is; those who have been deprived of its energizing units, either through lack or because of a repugnant school diet, may suffer later dangers in abbreviated lives. We must in honesty admit, however, that many are able to thrive upon its near substitute, a rich reading of experience; but that requires a much longer process, and few may take the chance that it will be assured to them by mere living along.

Our experience teaches us that in the higher school grades creative youth is well-read youth. It is reasonable, too, that a close communion with the myriad varied minds of other creative souls should be stimulating to creative effort. Nearly all the high-school poets are great readers.

If reading be the food of more abundant living, then we should do something about it, we mothers, fathers, and teachers. For myself I have a method for bringing the non-reading child, and the non-reading adult, for that matter, into a participation of my interest in the printed word, but I touch it here with hesitation, for it is just not possible, without grave misunderstanding, to translate into printed phrases what is really a performance, a reaction of spirit upon spirit.

With misgiving, then, I say that in tempting others to try the creative world of reading I do not hesitate to dramatize whatever I present to them. If I cannot so dramatize it I cannot read it to anybody. We must "be" the thing we read before we can appreciate it or have others appreciate our reading of it. If it is sad, we must be sad; if it is gay, we must be gay; and if it loves, we must love, too; and if it lilts and springs about and dances and sings (and here I know I shall be misunderstood as a unique fool, which I hasten to say I do succeed in not being) we must lilt and spring about and dance and sing. We must do all these things in our hearts and so become one with the written word; and if some of it escapes to a suggestion of visible and audible acting (I pray you do not let all of it so escape!), then our spirit takes on new power, becomes clairvoyant, and sees and speaks with the hosts of the invisible.

A higher appreciation of art always follows dramatization, whether it be of literature or of history or geography. When those little Western children stood in a semicircle, hand holding hand, and thought of themselves as the great Sierras which look down benignly upon their native California and forever, night and day through the ages, protect their land from blight and storm and the desert drought; and when they swayed gently and sang a recitative of the protecting might of the hills, I am sure that their imaginations were so touched that all their days they will feel the nearness of those mountains which they have once been themselves, and they will be the better for it. And those other children who sang and danced in the imaginary valley, who called joyously to their friends, the mountains, and named themselves orange blossom, apple blossom, down-o'-the-peach, wheat field, vineyard, these, too, grew in everlasting appreciation of their wonderful land.

All great literature is dramatic. That is what makes it literature. But one should know, of course, the danger in the dramatization of literature. Just because literature is itself dramatic—a play in which the reader is always the actor—it needs less theatric props and make-up than do the other branches of learning. I have seen dramatizations which simply swamp the poem under consideration and often make a caricature of it. In literature dramatization is only a device to make the appreciation more easy; its object is to bring the listening spirit out, to make it less self-conscious by making it a silent performer, to have it sway with the right vibration. For that reason the reader should often be the sole company of players. But woeful memories! I have heard just such a reader, in classroom, in the nursery, and on the radio, when every character was simply miscast!

To get the creative spirit vibrating properly—in tune, as it were—is the object of dramatization in reading, whether that be done by the teacher or parent acting a part, or by the children living over the reading in a play of their own making. Now the children, as a rule, give us no trouble. Their creative spirit is easily accessible. It requires only a touch to bring it out. It is so easy to set the little chaps in tune with a fine art. The older person has only to beckon into the land of make-believe.

As we grow older that beckoning gesture becomes an increasingly difficult thing to make. The struggle of existence hardens us, puts the grim lines about our eyes, sets our mouths, brings out the worst in us and congeals the better. Unless we watch, and perhaps pray, the creative spirit dies within us, or retreats so far into the recesses of our being that it may come out as seldom as the ground hog, and, like him, looking only for trouble, flying, indeed, at the sight of its own shadow. But these are just the times when the art of the reader becomes superlatively the art of the actor, of assuming an alien part. And this is my faith, that if we put on the appearance of life and cheer and interest in things, our own hidden spirit may be enticed to come forth again.

Indeed we may thus teach it to grow and arise at our bidding. We may bring our will to fight age. "On my soul!" we may confidently cry, "I shall not let my light die out! I will not! I shall pretend, assume, put on gaiety when I feel least inclined to gaiety; I shall of a truth act well my part! At heart, at least, I will never grow old!" Literature summons the eternal youth in us to be eternal. It is a constant challenge to Old Time.

With even more hesitation I add, again from purely personal experience, that the reader is helped if he believes still more fervently that life as well as literature is dramatic. To me every day is a drama, a sort of tragi-comedy, filled with incident, alive with surprising dialogue, and charged with the drollest fun. Often it is shadowed by sadness, but more often it trips fantastically; and always there is the romance which may end happily, or, more happily still, not end at all! I play all parts, from high priest to clown.

Many may reasonably feel that these thoughts on bringing youth into the communion of the saints are not personally applicable; but it is never too late to be young.

II

When a mother wrote asking for a private consultation on a very serious matter concerning her twelve-year-old boy I was prepared for many intimate disclosures, but not for her nervous and almost tearful ejaculation, "My son reads nothing but the Motor Boat Boys, one after another, and then begins the series all over again. What *is* to be done about it?"

My answer did not please her at all. "Nothing need be done about it," I assured her. "It is a normal, healthy sign. Be thankful that he reads at all."

"But we are a literary family!" she cried, annoyed at my light attitude. "We read the best books. He is surrounded by —everything; but he just will not look at anything but the Motor Boat Boys, and we've tried both punishment and money to make him stop."

She represented a common worry of literary mothers, who do not seem to understand that taste is a matter of normal growth, that it has its juvenile stage as well as its adult stage, and that, like all growth, it cannot be uprooted or transplanted at will without danger. Literary mothers and teachers generally are disturbed when children read books appropriate to their growth-stage; so they introduce penalties or rewards to cure what they believe to be an evil.

At the beginning of the consultation, therefore, I proceeded to break down the false fears of this worried mother, and I could do so with assurance because for some years a group of us had been studying the growth in reading taste in a considerable number of children in all school grades from the first to the end of the senior high school. At that moment I had before me a plot of the reading-for-pleasure of the oldest group. It was most satisfactory from any standard that one might raise; and I had records of the reading of these same children when they were twelve-year-olds. I could show the mother how the girls had gone through their *Campfire Girls' Larks and Pranks* and the boys their *Boy Scouts in the Philippines* to emerge five years later with an unaffected delight in George Meredith's *The Egoist* and George Bernard Shaw's *Cæsar and Cleopatra.*

It was easy, I recall, to bring assuring proof to this literary mother; and she has since found justification for our faith in her own lad. He came out of the Motor Boat Series at the proper season, and one day she dropped in to tell us gleefully how the boy had been holding forth rather vehemently in the home circle for three books which they had not yet got around to: Flecker's *Hassan*, Stephen's *Crock of Gold*, and Maurois's *Ariel*, literary enough, each of them, to suit the most ambitious of mothers. "He seemed just a little annoyed," she smiled, "at our failure to get the books immediately and make up our lack, and a little impatient, too, I think!"

"Ah-ha!" said I, and she grinned at me guiltily.

III

In our study of the reading tastes of children we took at various times a random selection of the favorite books of each young person. The simplest device for getting a cross section of the taste of a group is to secure the titles of the last few books read and the book now being read. Of course one must have worked up a right attitude toward such private confessions so that there is total absence of posing and no fear of the authorities. We were always at an advantage here because for years we had had no compulsory reading and had welcomed the worst penny dreadful with the same studied indifference as that of a limited edition on hand-made paper.

The objective of our experiment was to discover what would really be read by healthy children if given complete liberty of choice *in a book environment of the most tempting sort which we deliberately placed in their way.* Please note that we were not interested in what unassisted children would happen to like.

Almost invariably in such surveys the seventh-grade children were found enthusiastic for juveniles, or for books of adventure by standard authors, or for books about children's affairs; and gradually from grade to grade the interest swung toward writers of distinction. To take one such list that I have before me, fifty-six per cent. of the seventh-grade titles are juveniles, divided equally between a literary group like *Bob, Son of Battle* and *Treasure Island* and non-literary types such as *The Rover Boys* and *Campfire Girls.* In the ninth grade the juveniles drop to twenty-eight per cent.; in the eleventh grade to two per cent.; and in the twelfth grade there is none at all.

So with standard authors and contemporary books of distinction. About one third of the seventh-grade list might have this high classification, mainly because standard authors like Dumas, Kipling, Marryat, Dickens, Cooper, and Doyle have contributed enormously to easy-reading adventure; but this classification accounts for sixty-five per cent. of the ninth-grade reading-for-pleasure; and in the twelfth grade the voluntary reading is almost wholly on a good mature basis, over ninety per cent.

This rapidly taken general view of the book-likings of the whole group gave us other interesting information. We learned, for instance, that for the seventh grade the "mode," or type of book attracting the most readers, was among the non-literary juveniles; for the ninth and tenth grades, among standard authors before Kipling; for the eleventh grade, among standard authors from Kipling on (Kipling, Conrad, Masefield, Shaw, Barrie, Synge, Stevenson, Moody, Frost, for example); and in the twelfth grade it rested among contemporary writers of consequence, Poole, Merrick, Cather, Train, Walpole, Morley, and the like.

Let me try to have you visualize this picture of the growing quality in taste by presenting a book list of the volumes recently read by a typical boy and girl on the way up through the junior and senior high school. One can almost see the youngsters grow in discrimination and taste.

A BOY

Seventh Grade: Tom Swift and his Phototelephone (Young); Ralph on the Midnight Flyer (Chapman); Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea (Verne); Oliver Twist (Dickens).

Eighth Grade: Treasure Island (Stevenson); the Last of the Mohicans (Cooper); The Jungle Books (Kipling); The Dark Frigate (Hawes).

Ninth Grade: She Blows! (Hopkins); The Cruise of the Cachalot (Bullen); The Spy (Cooper); Two Years before the Mast (Dana).

Tenth Grade: The Blazed Trail (White); Under the Greenwood Tree (Hardy); Westward Ho! (Kingsley); The Three Musketeers (Dumas).

Eleventh Grade: Hassan (Flecker); If (Dunsany); Others for 1917 (Kreymborg); Henry Brocken (De la Mare).

Twelfth Grade: Rough Hewn (Canfield); My Disillusionment in Russia (Goldman); Ariel (Maurois); The Egoist (Meredith).

A GIRL

Seventh Grade: Ruth Fielding at Lighthouse Point (Emerson); Rose Mary (Bancroft); Jane Allen of the Sub-Team (Laurence); Betty Gordon (Emerson).

Eighth Grade: Boy Scouts of Birchbark Island (Holland); Animal Land (Colcord); The Black Arrow (Stevenson); Jack and Jill (Alcott).

Ninth Grade: A Bow of Orange Ribbon (Barr); The Little White Bird (Barrie); Peter and Wendy (Barrie); Jane Eyre (Brontë).

Tenth Grade: Silas Marner (Eliot); John Halifax (Mulock); Vanity Fair (Thackeray); The Honorable Peter Sterling (Ford).

Eleventh Grade. Les Misèrables (Hugo); Island Nights' Entertainment (Stevenson); The Crock of Gold (Stephens); An Inland Voyage (Stevenson).

Twelfth Grade: Nocturne (Swinnerton); A Lost Lady (Cather); The Pigeon (Galsworthy); Tristram Shandy (Sterne).

IV

We did something more, however, than watch children grow; we made a conscious effort to increase strength, endurance, and control of impulses. To spend five years in discovering that children do become older in time would not be much of a final announcement. That would be the Bo Peep Theory of children's reading. If you let them alone I should not be willing to guarantee that they will *all* come home with their literary tails wagging behind them. They might, at that! Certainly I prefer the Bo Peep Theory to the Old Woman Theory, devised by a lady, you remember, who was stupidly satisfied when she had spanked them all soundly and had sent them to bed.

In our work with children we achieved our best results from a persistent use of the Slow Mandy Theory, as suggested by the following text:

Slow Miss Mandy,
  Her babies weren't fat,
But they always wanted
  What they couldn't get at;
On the very top shelf
  She put the cream in a crock,
And she left the ladder handy
  And the key in the lock.

The Slow Mandy Theory is worthy of a book, but all that I may do here is to make dogmatic statements about it as learned in a five-year experimentation; although in the volatile and unpredictable material called youth, I have learned to discount dogmatism.

Perhaps that is the first dogmatic statement to make:

Never be dogmatic and never be superior. To sneer at taste is caddish at its best; and certainly it is futile. Taste is taste and should be respected at whatever level found.

Second, taste grows through the stages of saturation and surfeit. When all the Motor Boat Series have been read the fourth time the lad finds himself naturally ready for a slightly better grade of material.

Third, and most important: that material should be at hand at just that precise moment. *Without a large library and a gifted librarian our experiment would have brought us no worthy results.*

Fourth: read that last sentence again!

Fifth: the material that is to lift the Motor-boatist through the locks into the next level need not be really good in the adult or literary sense. Of course the Old Woman would cast it out the window as trash; but that is because she conceives taste as a leap from the ground floor to the roof (I always picture her pitching her children to bed into the top of that prodigious boot. She lived, you see, before the day of steps). A study of children's tastes will someday show us an inclined plane through many stages of inferior material up to that high literary standard over which teachers have customarily grown so frigidly ecstatic. Laura Zirbes will have something to say on this matter one of these days, I fancy, for her studies of children show the existence of these saturation levels in even the reading of first- and second-grade youngsters.

Sixth: an atmosphere of enticing suggestion must be set up, preferably by the children themselves. An honest enthusiasm from a child will easily convince another child of the worth of trying a book, while the most engaging smile of mother or teacher, accompanied by that lulling voice of pumped-up delight associated so often with bitter medicine, is as transparent to discerning youth as advertisements of fire sales.*

**Realms of Gold*, by Bertha E. Mahony and Elinor Whitney (Doubleday, 1929, $5.00) is a wonder mine of nearly four thousand titles of books for boys and girls from age one up.

Seventh: teachers, mothers, governesses, and elder sisters must cultivate honesty. In the matter of reading we are all afraid of disclosing our real likes; so we advocate the world's best literature when in our hearts we know that, for us at least, it is often the world's worst. We fear that if we tell the truth—so we rationalize—our influence with youth will be gone. Well, that should not worry us, for, to speak only of esthetics, that influence went long ago; and it will not come back until we elders cease playing safe on the matter of our personal tastes, for youth has ever been a foe to hypocrisy and pretense.

V

A large part of the Slow Mandy Theory, one sees, has to do with the withdrawal of adult standards that do not correspond with child standards. Youth is the sole judge of what it likes. Another large part has to do with our own honesty in recording personal reactions to reading. Youth finds honesty in this matter easy enough and needs no lessons in it, but for adults it is a stiff course with failure almost certain.

Posing is so ingrained in us that few—let us be fair to ourselves—are even aware of practicing it. So the Slow Mandy Theory should not begin with children at all but with classes of adults. The subject for the first year should be a struggle to answer the question, "Now, honestly, what do I really read myself for pleasure and delight?" It will take the whole year, and there will be a lot of liars uncaught at the end.

The course should be compulsory for teachers, principals, superintendents of schools, textbook writers, publishers, makers of courses of study, college entrance examiners—oh, don't let us omit the college entrance examiners—and, finally, governesses, elder sisters, and literary mothers.

Chapter XIX

PUTTING THE SCREWS ON 'EM

As THIS story of the creative life is a friendly challenge to the schools, one must face the conditions that actually exist in the highly mechanized organizations of so many public and private educational institutions. Personally I am most encouraged by the general outlook. I have just returned from a six-thousand-mile journey, made at the invitation of groups all over the country, during which time I came into personal relations with nearly twenty thousand persons. Their cordial welcome to the belief in the fruits of the spirit satisfies me amply as to the trend of education. And last year William Bogan brought me before three thousand of his Chicago teachers; they came from long distances after a day's work in the classroom, and their outspoken interest and their intelligent laughter I remember and prize as proof of the right sort of educational preferences.

Young teachers and artist teachers of experience, however, continue to tell me a different story of school conditions wherein the creative life has simply no chance for existence. Some of these are so worried over what they wrongly conceive to be their own failure that, again as with children, I must play psychiatrist to remove the great evil of depression.

To them I say, "Under the conditions you can do very little. No mere classroom teacher could do anything. Not only are the administrators of your school against free life but the community also; and even the pupils would oppose it. Cheer up and be thankful that in a small measure you may reach a few of your children. The problem in your case is not a classroom affair at all but a social problem that involves the whole of your little world. One might as well invite an African tribe to remove the ring from their noses!"

Every part of a great country like ours does not advance with the same stride. Among certain groups of our population one hears the screaming of irate mothers, observes the wild shaking of children, the fierce smashes of mother hand to child face, brutality, really, which the children seem to accept as a useful and necessary part of living. School authorities in those neighborhoods would have difficulty in getting results from the children by more humane methods; certainly at first the children would not respect them if they should try. Of course, Angelo Patri obtained both respect and acquiescence; but, alas, Angelo Patris are not plentiful.

Here is a picture that is presented to me by a colleague in the University; he has permitted me to copy the letter which has just come to him from one of his teacher-students:

"You may recall the writer as a member of your class in Methods in Geography at Blank last year," she writes. "I am in a very unusual situation, a mouse in a huge cheese which has fibers so tough that it seems I cannot gnaw my way out. I need and crave your help.

"I have taken a position at Blank School, in a 100% Italian section. The homes of the children are for the most part very unhappy, with a sprinkling of happier ones. There are knocks and kicks, cursings, dirt, some vermin and other unhappy mixtures in the families. Perhaps you know the type in Blank?

"My 'job' is Geography, thirty-minute periods, ten periods a day in fifth and sixth grades. Promotions are made every three months. Specifically grade 5C is to 'cover' the Northeastern Section of the U. S. with stress on State Geography. Grade 5B is to cover North Central, Southern Plateau and Pacific States. Grades 5A and 6C, mixed, have South America and Europe; while 6B and 6C are to take Europe and Asia, all in three months. And they are expected to 'pass' an examination. I have one set of books for eight classes, McMurry and Parkins, and only one.

"The child's interpretation is limited. We cannot call upon his experience except from his play on his own street. Very few read anything at all, and when they do it is the 'Tabloid paper.' They are up-to-date on murders and crime. As you may guess, it requires a big person to handle the situation.

"When I went there they tried me in a hundred ways—marbles, spitballs, rubber balls by the dozen. They laughed and talked and fought and disobeyed right and left. They did not respond to 'please' any more than a cow would. I was a pin in a heap of dirt.

"Little tots of nine are mixed in with huge fellows with I. Q.'s of sixty and less. There was not a thing I could tell them or show them that would interest them *all* at the same time. Even when they were not malicious they did not want anything I had. Finally with a huge stick brandished in the air I got attention. It is now five hundred per cent. better but so far from what I want. With forty-five in a class, of ages from nine to fifteen, it seems to me a stupendous task.

"You may know what I am up against when I tell you that a Miss Blank was there for years. She is now practically insane at the age of thirty-eight, in a sanitarium. The teacher who came after her resigned after six weeks. Men have a worse time than women, they tell me.

"Now, what do you think is the trouble? Is our system all wrong? What is the need of the child? Is it just lawlessness on his part, or rebellion against the lack of receiving what he needs? My principal is a kind man, sympathetic and human to a high degree. He wants smaller classes and opportunity classes for the defective or slow. We cannot have them. I feel as if I *must* succeed and help him. If I go he says he cannot get any one as good as I to come here. But I am not satisfied. The defiance, the bad habits, the inattention, the restlessness of the ones who cause the trouble make one's life miserable.

"How am I to find what the child needs? When found, how shall I meet them? I can't even get simple materials. I asked for labels from cans. They eat the same things every day—

tomatoes, ripe olives, beans—I have about twenty so far.

"Assuming that the fault lies in me *alone* (I have never met rebellion in Geography work before), that I am inefficient, not big enough for the work, can you give me any suggestions as to what to do? I shall be willing to pay money for it and give you the glory.

"As it stands now, I am making little progress, tho far from giving up. When I get on the right track I shall steam up. By the way, yesterday I taught the Mississippi flood to all classes. *I* did all the talking and the map drawing. They merely listened. But they *did* listen. Is that teaching Geography? I got attention, but at night my throat ached. Then the old question, 'What shall I do now?'

"I know you are a busy man. I thought of writing you because I know you are so human; and you, if any one, can help me. Can you spare me some time?"

For anyone who has ever faced a classroom of children, that is a heart-rending picture. One's pity goes out to the brave young woman who is sticking it out, but one knows that the real trouble does not lie with her but with that whole community. Of course the school organization does not fit either individual or community needs. It would be a long story to tell what should be done, but many a reader knows without being told. We are all aware of what Angelo Patri would do in that Italian school!*

The commonest answer to a bad social condition is to outdo the community in the fierce disciplining of its children. "They're a bad lot," one principal told me, "so we put the screws on 'em, and then they are not so bad." Long experience with the screws had turned him, I noted, into the type which in the Army we call "hard-boiled."

A young teacher of experience in just such schools writes: "Education as it exists in most schools is cruel. I cannot see one redeeming feature about it. Thank goodness, the children do not seem to realize the extent of our cruelty until they

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**A Schoolmaster in a Great City*, by Angelo Patri (Macmillan).

themselves are grown and circumstances have forced them to take their places in the equally awful adult tyranny.

"There seems to me to be nothing in this world so wonderful or so beautiful as a child, and how we abuse them! Beautiful little bodies, aching to stretch their tiny growing muscles, and forced to control those instincts, upon the exercise of which their future health may depend.

"It's wrong, of course, but what is a poor teacher to do, with the standards the way they are? She is forced by everything about her to keep up the maddening effort to force those restless, inquisitive, adorable little hands to stay tightly folded, or they will get into what our school calls mischief. She says, 'Pencils down! Hands folded!' a hundred times a day, until they become meaningless sounds, until she finds herself saying one when she means the other, and hasn't strength enough left to smile at the joke on herself.

"What else is there to do? Caldwell Cook thinks that children can learn without sitting still, and he is undoubtedly right." She is referring to her reading of Caldwell Cook's book, *The Play Way*. "But the teacher realizes that that very common and really vulgar individual who inhabits the office down the hall, may walk by at any time and glance in through the glass window of the door to see that everything is in 'perfect order.'

"You really cannot fight against her. She is so firmly rooted in the practical methods of a discipline that admits of nothing but uncompromising rigidity and silence."

Whenever I read this letter to groups of progressive teachers there is always a shout of recognition; and I am assured on all sides that the notion of child control as pictured is a prevailing one.

Anyone taking over such an institution would have a hard time making a change to the newer ways. Perhaps nothing can be done with the children of the upper half of such a school. One must wait until they get out. The transition stage, if one were courageous enough to make an about face in the school procedures, would be long, and the results, in the meantime, would be so unsatisfactory as to lead, in all probability, to a community protest. It takes about five years to make the readjustment from the old to the new; no wonder, then, that the established disciplinarian is not eager to risk his reputation, and possibly his job, for the ultimate good of that community's children. Especially as he is not at all likely to receive any public gratitude for his pains.

Nevertheless, every progressive superintendent of schools knows that his first business is to go out into his community and win it to an acceptance of the new ideas in education. That is a criterion for judging the worth of any public school administrator. Communities (including boards of education) notoriously lag behind the best professional thinking; they must be continuously urged to step forward.

This is a job easily shirked, and it is a hard one and a dangerous one. My acquaintance among superintendents of schools is largely drawn from those who risk their professional lives daily in the difficult business of educating the adult citizenry to understand what is best for their children. In some instances the risk involves their own personal safety and that of their families. Unknown to the public at large a serious war is being fought by courageous men who have gone, like missionaries, into backward communities for the fine social purpose of raising the general standard of public education.

Within the past year I have stood beside one of these progressive superintendents in the main thoroughfare of a Pennsylvania mining town while a crowd of sullen men milled around him menacingly. An enlightened Board of Education had selected him as a fearless and intelligent administrator—which he is, every cubic inch of him—to bring into that community the advantages of a modern school system; but local hotheads had started an aggressive battle before he had had a chance even to get acquainted.

At their instigation a strike had been called among the pupils, who had been encouraged to parade the streets with insulting banners. He had managed to get the children back into the schools, but a series of underground slanders, some of them most vicious and damning, had inflamed the opposition once more. They had petitioned the Board of Education to dismiss him and, at the moment of my arrival, were awaiting the decision. There was no doubt in anybody's mind that the Board would stand by the superintendent unanimously, so the open threats made to his face that if he stayed he would be shot some night as he drove home were, in that locality, not to be taken as mere gesture.

The superintendent moved all day from man to man in that crowd. Often he offered a cigar as a genial truce to debate; always he smiled and listened, was courteous and tolerant. While the Board was meeting in solemn session in one of the buildings near us he worked with the leaders of the opposition.

"Just tell me one thing you have against me, North," he said to one tall miner. (Of course I don't remember any actual names.) The miner shifted about awkwardly, while the mob craned forward; here was an encounter unexpected, but the superintendent had deliberately sought it. The superintendent proffered a cigar, while he bit off the end of one for himself. The miner hesitated, then took the cigar and bit into it. That American offer-and-take was good sign language for permission to open negotiations.

"All right!" the tall miner accepted the dare. "I'll tell you!" Then followed a harrowing tale of alleged misconduct while Superintendent of Schools of Albany. The crowd surrounded them but kept a slight distance off and watched solemnly.

As the miner grew more and more denunciatory in his recital the superintendent slowly lowered his head and studied the ground; it was to the crowd a satisfactory picture of guilt apprehended by righteousness. But when the long story was done the superintendent raised his head and disclosed a face alive with suppressed mirth. "Would it make any difference to you, North," he said, "if I told you I never was in Albany in my life?" The genial laugh that followed shook even North's confidence.

The crowd observed that North was discomfited. They saw him chew at his cigar, while he was muttering, "Well, that's what they say," and puff away vigorously, excellent American sign language, all of it, for defeat.

"It's all right, North," the superintendent said kindly as he left him, "you and I can stand that kind of talk about us and laugh it off, but we can't spend all our time on that sort of thing, for we've got those children in the schools to take care of. And that's a big job all by itself! So long, North!"

To another opponent he said, "George, that's something any foolish old woman can say in ten seconds, but it would take me three weeks to gather all the proof together and make you sure that it is all a vicious lie. Anybody can say things like that. Give me time and I'll prove every one of these accusations to be a dirty falsehood. Look at the story about my being a slacker during the war; and kept going for weeks by the American Legion, too! That's the prize one! And when they found out that there wasn't a man in the county who had gone into the war earlier, left later, or seen more fighting service, *didn't* they look foolish!"

George asked, "But why didn't you tell them you'd been in the fightin', when they was raisin' all the fuss over it?"

The superintendent squared off and looked every inch a fighting man. "If any man comes straight up to me he'll hear the truth from me. I'm not going to rush around wherever I hear there's a meeting and answer accusations that have never been put to me personally. I let the American Legion rave until one of them came straight up and asked me my war record. I told him. Just the same as you, George, he wanted to know why I hadn't denied this and that. And I told him why, and he shook hands and said, 'By gad, you're right!' And I am right. After all," a complete dropping of the belligerent tone, "this isn't my fight. What does it matter what they call me? We've got those children to take care of. That's the real fight, and it will take a lot of pulling together to win. Give me time, George, and I'll win that fight, too. Be a sport, George, and give me half a chance."

An ugly group lunged up; we were told that they were striking miners from a near-by district. One of them said, "We know your car and we know the road you take nights. We'll get you." The superintendent smiled, with disarming lack of malice, and said quietly, "All right, boys. After this I'll always drive slow!" They were none the less ugly as they moved awkwardly away, but they did seem puzzled.

The ostensible cause of the latest outburst was credited to the new superintendent's order modifying an old rule that had required the immediate whipping of children for certain school offenses. The real cause, of course, was the objection to any sort of progress.

That night, when we knew that the local paper was carrying a headline, an eight-column bold-face "screamer," announcing the refusal of the Board of Education to dismiss the superintedent, and that, therefore, it was now a question how far the individual campaign in the streets that day had affected the issue, we sat together in the living room of his home and talked the whole thing out.

His brave wife told me that she had been called up in the night to receive telephone messages from men who threatened to put out the eyes of her children and let them find their way home if she and her husband did not leave town.

But she said, "This is a fight for all the children, and the majority of the people are with us. The others are really good people; they will come around after a while. The Board of Education has begged us to stay. If we leave now, they say, they will never be able to get another good man to accept a place here. My husband and I have talked it out, and we have decided to stick."

The latest news from the front is that he has won over an important group of those who were opposing him and that lately the pupils, former strikers, cheered him as he entered one of the buildings. Improvements that he had thought must wait many months have been adopted with a really surprising acquiescence. As his comprehensive plan placed health first, he has quietly reduced the importance of the athletic "teams," substituting games for all. A trained physical education man has been permitted to replace the "winning coach." Recently he has persuaded a public-spirited citizen to present an ample athletic field to the schools. He moves swiftly, but he has worked openly with his community all the time, and it is already responding hopefully to his professional touch and keeping pace with him. The danger is not yet over, but we predict that that town will soon be one of the educational show places of the state.

Whenever lately a fine young teacher has told me of community conditions that make it impossible to introduce humane modern methods of instruction, or of a school organization which is inimical to the best interests of youth and is playing safe with its prison discipline, sure that its ignorant clientele will not know enough to call the administrators to account, I think of the battle going on at this moment in that Pennsylvania mining town. That unselfish fight for social betterment is a picture that should give courage to educators over the land, for it exalts our profession, as all acts of heroism do for the special group it represents; and Heaven knows that the profession of public education is in need of just such sacrifices to redeem it from the constant charge of selfish sloth and insensitiveness.

Here is another letter and another picture. Such communications as these have come to me unsolicited; they represent a huge correspondence with forward-looking teachers in the grades who know the right but are not permitted always to perform their best service:

"Let me describe our primary school assembly period. First, the classes filing in, thirty or forty tiny imps in each, some tramping loudly, some sauntering casually; the teacher, a stern-faced, tight-lipped woman at the head of each line, clapping her hands, 'Left! Right! Left! Right!'

"The children scramble into their seats, noisily stowing away their books. The teacher shouts at them to sit up and fold their hands.

"Silence comes and complete immobility. To turn their heads ever so little, or to raise their hands to brush away a few hairs, is to call for a sharp individual scolding before everybody or, possibly, a rushing pounce and a severe shaking. Poor darlings. It is agony to want to scratch one's nose and not be able to do it.

"When everything is absolutely still, one of the teachers ascends the platform, a chord is played on the piano, and these little tots stand and salute their flag. Then they are harried into a strict listening to a passage from the Bible, which I am sure the teacher herself does not understand or she would never read it the way she does.

"How the children stand it I don't know. The teachers group around the sides of the room and gossip, although no one else dare speak to a neighbor, while one teacher, who is master of ceremonies for the week, raves and rants and preserves perfect order among the children, who sing a lot of songs they hate and wouldn't think of singing if they didn't have to.

"To laugh is a crime. I saw a teacher in the assembly period give a child a terrible shaking while informing the little one on the subject of good manners, thus: 'Have (*shake*) you (*shake*) no (*shake*, *shake*, *shake*) manners at all?! (*shake and slam*)

"Only teachers, one of them informed the children, have the right to laugh.

"O John Dewey, what is a poor teacher to do when she is set down in an environment like that!"

It seems incredible that such an environment for children really exists in these days. Why, that is exactly the sort of prison I suffered in, a quarter of a century and more ago. I recall those scarecrow teachers, strong, sinewy, dominant; and an even stronger and sinewier one in the office behind the glass partitions where beatings, it seemed, went on all day.

Scandal once broke loose and claimed that one of them had been caught sitting on the lap of the married grocer man who, it was alleged, was kissing her; but not a boy in the school would believe that tale!

With all the preachment and all the successful practice of a more humane way of schooling little children, is it possible that these outrageous and really iniquitous institutions still take revenues from the State? Edward Yeomans, a business man who took time off to visit schools in order to find out what was actually going on behind the scenes, reports this same sort of ignorant tyranny as hopelessly common.* It is like coming upon a big merchant who has not given up haggling with his customers over prices; or of finding a physician who still sets himself up as an accomplished cupper and leecher. Evidently the work of the preacher and the satirist must still go on.

Lately certain professors of education have been asking for the return of the whip; they plead for the privilege of terrifying children in order to incite them to moral endeavor. Their argument is the old one: tyranny exists in Society, therefore children should get their share early. Who told them, one might reasonably ask, that fear, physical punishment, ignorant brutality, and vicious insensitiveness had gone entirely from the school? One must remember, however, that these professors of education do not spend their lives in the classrooms with children; and that, after all, they are only at their old scholastic quarrel over what some other professor has said in his book. But their eloquent demands for more terrorizing—what good cheer that will bring to all the sadistic masters in child education!

A great obstruction to forward movements in child education comes from men who raise the cry of "soft pedagogy" against all the refinements which patient professional research is developing. We say men, note, for this is almost

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*In *Shackled Youth,* by Edward Yeomans (Little, Brown). Agnes de Lima tells a similar story in *Our Enemy the Child* (New Republic publications).

wholly an exhibition of the male psychology of dominance. "Soft pedagogy," of course, is an unfair use of an *ad hominem* analogy, as any student of logic knows; but it works, as such catch phrases always do, upon the uninformed and upon the professionally obtuse. It is strangely like the cry raised years ago against anesthetic surgery, some echoes of which one still hears in remote rural districts, where, by the way, it takes on that same male aspect of hardness, justifying itself and its ways with women and children by arguing, for instance, that the removal of the hand wash-tub and the sixteen-hour day from family life would be the softening and the consequent demoralization of civilization. "Blood and iron!" was their male cry then as it is now when they seek to impose their small tyrannies upon the young. Then as now they seem to believe in being hard without purpose, in multiplying difficulties and in constructing artificial hardships, in obstructing youth for the sake solely of obstructing youth—as if there was some singular virtue in being disagreeable! One wonders why they permit a roof over their houses or springs under the front seat, why they continue to suffer the advantages of central heating and sanitary plumbing.

Natural and appropriate drudgery, of course, is one of the saving ingredients in healthy life; in its right functioning place it is a thing to welcome and rejoice in, like any other fine restricting rule of a game; if life could be constructed so as to be free from toil and trouble, which fortunately cannot be accomplished, we should then go out of our way to invent some. *Hardship, difficulty, wearying struggle, these are the very meat of the new education when properly understood in the light of the larger purposes of self-discipline and self-mastery.*

But such larger purposes do not seem to interest those other hardy souls. Any fine thing that a child has been led to choose with a strong and healthy interest, that they would abolish, the free choice being the criterion of its wickedness.

Although a parent or teacher may have worked for months to achieve the great moment of right choosing, the victory becomes at that very moment "soft pedagogy."

Well, the Sermon on the Mount is soft pedagogy; and the sinking of the *Lusitania* was not.

II

I spend so much of my time in joyful consultation upon common problems with the progressive group that often I forget, until my University students remind me, that the old discipline of torture still lingers balefully to obstruct every forward movement for which we stand. Sometimes, however, I drop into one of the highly mechanistic schools and ask to see the best "reciter." And often I take down the whole proceeding. It makes amusing reading among the adherents of the other school of thought where that type of recitation just does not exist at all; where it is considered, for the educational outcomes which the newer group believe to be important in child life, indeed quite useless and time wasting.*

In one instance, where a good friend was the governing officer, I was met with the response, "Sure, I'll show you a 'reciter'; and she is a good one too, the best in the business, I'll tell the world." There was pride in his step as he showed me into her room.

A lovely young person smiled healthily in the front of that class. I could not conceal the effect upon me. My friend, the principal, was watching me for just that result. He whispered, "Didn't I tell you she was a knock-out!" Beautiful and intelligently alert, was my thought; and one glance at that class of ordinary city boys, grubby and clumsily clothed, showed me that they were her ardent and groveling slaves.

She had already held a written quizz as the preliminary to an oral recitation on five pages of history. Occasionally she glanced at her wrist watch, for she was working on a schedule

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*See *The Passing of the Recitation*, by V. T. Thayer (Heath).

that demanded a certain position among the five pages at every minute of the twenty-five allotted for the oral work. But she was cool; watchful but cool; one knew that she would calmly drive the lesson through on schedule time. And she was altogether lovely.

The recitation began as the papers came up the aisles, the collection done by a series of appointed assistants, itself a piece of efficient, quiet machinery. All books closed at a nod from her head; at another nod, and a most disturbing smile, all books went silently beneath desks.

"Who was the undoubted leader among the Republicans, McCann?" she asked. Her voice was easy and really charming. The gentle smile played upon McCann, who seemed dazzled by it for the moment, but he managed to say, "Adams."

"McCarthy?" she said dolefully. McCann slid into his seat, crumpled and defeated. McCarthy rose and guessed, "Hamilton?" It was such an obvious guess that she smiled broadly at him and said, "McClure?"

McClure was now sure of the answer, for only Jefferson was left; so he said, "Jefferson," and was rewarded by, "Right!"

The whole class seemed to withdraw from tension at her exultant "Right!"

Then she began again, "Who was the real leader among the Federalists, McLaughlin?"

"Adams," said McLaughlin.

"Again!" she said, which all knew meant that someone was stupid, for there was a general movement and a slight laugh, which she suppressed by a mere raised eyebrow. "Who was the real leader among the Federalists, Manley?"

Manley suggested, "Jefferson."

"Mann?" she said.

Mann suggested, "Adams."

"Steady!" she admonished. "We're talking about Federalists this time. Manners?"

I noticed that no one had a second chance, and that almost secretly she was jotting down a record in a tiny book that she was able to conceal in her hand. Also I felt grateful that she didn't call on me, for I did not know a single answer to any of her questions!

Manners rose and announced his disgust with all the other lunkheads, and incidentally his loyalty to the lovely teacher, by drawling a sarcastic, "Hamilton."

"Right!" She looked at Manners with such complaisant indulgence as to make one assured that Manners was amply repaid. Like a good sport Manners returned the warm look with equal steadiness while the blood mounted among the short hairs at the back of his neck, and every mother's son of us would have given a silver dollar to exchange places with him. This, one is confident, was one of Manners's great moments in history.

Reluctantly she glanced at her wrist watch and asked, "Why wasn't Hamilton chosen to lead his party for the Presidency? He was too—— Manuel?"

"Popular," cried Manuel, certain of being right and already seeing himself the recipient of one of those laurel wreath glances.

"March?" she went on, turning from him coldly.

Silence.

"Marcus B.?"

No response.

"Marcus L.?"

Ditto.

"Marcus S.?"

"Unpopular."

"Right! Adams won by how many votes, Marigold?"

"Sixty-eight."

"Marks?"

"One hundred and sixty-eight."

"Marsh?"

Timidly inquiring, "One hundred and fifty-eight?"

She gathered up speed and frightened them by her indignation. "Marks?" she asked, and "Mathison?" "Mattold?"

"Mayer?" in rapid succession. Then she stopped satisfied before a pale little Russian lad. She let the class see her confidence while she waited for a second or two. The little boy smiled back with equal confidence. It was a compelling stage picture. Then she said slowly, "Mazurkrewitz?" repeating softly, "Adams won by how many votes?"

"Three," said Mazurkrewitz quietly.

This was good for a great laugh. The prize boy had blundered. They laughed on. She let them, but she sent a luminous smile to the little Russian boy. The laugh died down into puzzled quietness.

"Right!" she said, and looked them all over good-humoredly as a pack of pleasant idiots. "The vote was 71 for Adams and 68 for Jefferson, so Adams won by three votes. Ears up, everybody!"

The laugh rose again. The joke was on them! Someone waggled hands to ears, so that the suggestion of donkey, which she had so deftly tossed to them, might be emphasized. The tense moment had left them sprawling in comfortable attitudes.

She straightened herself just a trifle and said quietly, "Position!" Instantly that detachment came to attention, legs in, bodies stiff, eyes front.

"The most obnoxious laws," she resumed, "of this administration were—Metcalf?"

Metcalf began with a rush on a part of the lesson that he had committed with care, "The breach with France, 1796–1799. The new President had barely assumed office when news arrived——"

"Meehan?" she broke in, and shattered Metcalf's dream of victory. She turned to the discomfited Metcalf long enough to whisper a smiling, "Ears! The *obnoxious* laws, I said."

Meehan did not know. Meinz did not know. Melby did not know. Melcher merely stood up and sat down again. Merwin did not move. Metzitziski said, "The Alien and Sedition Acts, 1798," and received a grateful, "Right!"

She asked, "What were these laws, briefly?" She asked

Miller, A., Miller, B., Miller, D., who merely said, "These laws were——," Miller, J., Miller, W., who got no further than, "They said——." But when she came to Miner in the front row she found him frowning and staring ahead with thoughts of his own. "Asleep!" she suggested to the rest of the class, which brought Miner to with a jump. "What were the Alien and Sedition laws?" she was sport enough to repeat, but Miner shook his head. "Minnis?" she turned with evident relief in getting over a hard part of the roll.

Minnis went off at high speed in what everyone will recognize as a perfect recitation: "The Alien Ack authorized the Pres'dent t' order any aliens he shall judge dang'rous to the peace an' safety o' the 'Nited States to depart outta the terr't'ry o' the 'Nited States. The S'dition Ack make it a crime f'r any person to unlawf'lly c'bine with an intent t' 'pose any measure o' the gumment or t' impede th' operation of any law, or t' imitate any gumment official."

"Right! *Intimidate* not *imitate*. . . . Right! Wasn't that right, Miner? . . . Still asleep!"

A joyous moment while Miner came out of his daydream, discovered himself the subject of one of her jokes, frowned, but melted into smiles as she continued to give him her friendly regard.

A quick snap of the wrist watch. "Position!" Swiftly she darted ahead. A hand waved, attempting to get recognition, but she was sailing through the matters of the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions, with her eye on that wrist watch. Monroe, Montgomery, Moody, Mooney, Moran, and Moore gave some or little assistance, but the hand, still propped up, begged for permission. Morgan, B., Morgan, C., Morrison, and Mostino had been put through the ordeal before she turned to the chap who really wanted to say something.

"You've had your turn," she told him, but he swung his arm pleadingly, so she said, "Well, be quick; we must cover the ground."

"Them Alien and Sedition Laws," he drove in breathlessly, "my father says that they're just like what we're having today when the State elects Socialists and the government won't let 'em take their places in the legislature, and puts 'em out and won't let people speak when they think the government ain't doing what's right, and my father says——"

"That will do," she stopped all that. "We haven't time to go into that now." Followed her battery of prepared questions, step by step with the textbook, until each member of that class had had two turns, and all of the failures had had an extra chance to redeem themselves in a review.

That review was a magnificent piece of recitation teaching. Suddenly she increased her speed, darting question after question, exactly the same ones as she had used more deliberately at first, until that mass of seeming failures had turned into seeming successes. Even I knew that lesson before she had completed her magnificent movement *allegro fortissimo.*

Miner, however, could not be enticed from his absorbing dream. She awakened him again and again, but even her skill could not convince him of the importance of the ancient party quarrels of Adams, Hamilton, Jefferson *et al.* He was the only failure announced at the end of the period.

He seemed like a healthy intelligent boy; my whole interest went out to him and to the fierce thinking that had held him aloof from even the spell of that charming young woman.

Hands were raised occasionally, but she dominated with a compelling eye that would permit no interruptions.

She still had a smiling minute to go while she was reading the names of those who had made A, B, and C grades and the single failure, Miner. "The next assignment," she announced, but I was surprised that no one moved to take note until I heard her say, "the next five pages."

A far-off bell rang in the school. "Attention!" She added, "Ears!" for the few that had not snapped into it. "Rise! . . . Turn! . . . March!" As an Army man I thought that they held an excellent file, but this officer was not satisfied.

"Mooney, out!" she announced. "Moran, out! Morgan, B., out!"

These three dropped into seats and faced her with happy grins. Lucky they to have this longer view of her. With a kind of playful adoration she looked at them and commanded softly, "Attention! . . . Rise! . . . Turn! . . . March!" the which movements they performed with military precision amid catlike silence.

The bells in the upper hall were ringing as the last lad stepped through the door. Five pages, everybody quizzed, lessons announced for the next period, all out on the split second; and no interruptions from merely excited youngsters who had got up an outside interest in the subject of the lesson.

III

"Didn't I tell you!" said my friend, the principal. "Isn't she a wonder!"

"Yes," I agreed.

"She's the most popular teacher in this school," said he.

"She'd have no difficulty being popular with me," said I.

We conversed upon other matters in the office; there did not seem to be the least hope in discussing with him the relation of the recitation to the creative life, or to any kind of life.

While the principal talked on, extolling the marvelous control of that popular and lovely teacher, I was thinking of youth I knew whose hours had not been altogether subjected to the strong will of another, and who, therefore, had found a voice of their own.

As I reflect now upon that history recitation, the words of another schoolboy pace through my mind. All his life he had been permitted to build up out of himself a store of astonishing things, beyond words to tell; he had reached carefully into the quiet center of life within him and was made wise. At about the age of those lads, and like them, no doubt, with a history lesson to learn for the morrow, W. K .F. had written:

WISDOM

Ask me of blood, I who have been to the wars,
Ask me the way the meadow looks in the spring,
Ask me to conjure up the mystical stars
And the white moon glimmering;

Wild bees tasting the honey of sweet wild clover,
Murmur of tall grass that is ready to mow,
The gay lark's song, and hawthorne bursting over
The hills like a drift of snow;

Beautiful ships beating home from far places,
Shattering opalescence of pounding seas,
Abasing beauty and sadness of women's faces;
Ask me of these.

When beauty leaps to the heart like a great cry
Not to be stilled today or ever after,
The voices of dead men out of history
Are only an echo of laughter.

Chapter XX

THE CONSERVATION OF YOUTH POWER

In all discussions of education one should be convinced at the start that we know next to nothing about youth. It is most important that we should be sure first that we know next to nothing about youth, if we are ever to do anything about it; for progress in the matter is stopped at the outset by the universal assumption of perfect knowledge.

What we have indubitably gone through we have somehow forgotten. Forgotten? I doubt if we ever really knew, for as young persons we were not aware of the law of our own life, and as elders we have taken over the conventional prejudices of elders.

Our memory is false memory, for it gives us almost nothing but conventional adult pictures: it remembers youth as something pitiable, stupid, weak, and often contemptible, and in each age of civilization this adult false memory has nourished a traditional enmity to youth, a matter which I shall leave the Freudians to explain.

"Crabbed age and youth," goes the old song, "cannot live together." They cannot. It is the oldest of wars, and, like all wars, its basis lies in a stupid but profound misunderstanding.

In fact, youth, as youth, does not know enough to comprehend itself. And it does not want to know; it has been trained to desire the things of maturity, its ideal is to be manly, womanly, to grow up. It stretches itself, adopts the swagger and trick of age, seeks passionately to get out of the guilty rôle of childhood; it denies itself, disclaims its own virtues, discounts its own worth, and the reason is to be found in the overwhelming social pressure brought against childhood and in favor of adulthood. Formal education is this pressure organized, but the world at large is almost as formidable.

We sneer at childhood and make most of our jokes at its expense: its will is obstinacy, its indignation is bad temper, its artistry is idling, its poetry is silliness, its enthusiasm is noise, even its passion is only puppy love. We have an evil name for all of its natural characteristics; we praise it only when it apes our own. No wonder, then, that youth does not rise to its own defense but agrees with its adversary quickly.

Youth, of course, is quite able to give a good account of itself if it had an unprejudiced hearing, but we do not offer it much of a chance. The first truthful word, and all the immediate social forces are in arms, the charge being anything from disrespect and vulgarity to blasphemy. Repartee is resented as "talking back," or, if cleverer than our own, as impertinence. Questions whose promptings are in the best spirit of scientific inquiry are either not answered or they are parried with evasions or, from the point of view of youth, with lies. So with questions whose fine urge is the search for economic truth, religious truth, moral truth, for explanations of our mysterious and perilous physical and mental make-up. A fruitful experiment in moral education is open to anyone brave enough to search out what youth really thinks of itself and of its relations to its elders and to its so-called superiors generally.

Not many adults, however, would be qualified to make that experiment. As a rule adults have a petrifying influence upon the young. I have often watched this powerful psychic benumbing; I have seen groups of children change in a flash from highly intelligent artists into clumsy stupids, owing to the mere presence of an alien adult. And the adult is often a fine fellow, smilingly unaware of the world that has vanished with his entrance into it; so when one of these fine fellows talks knowingly of youth and the ways of youth—as they do in a thousand educational conventions and educational magazines—I think of Josiah Royce's favorite classroom metaphor, "It is like an arc light roaming about the world seeking its own shadow."

Teachers, alas, have often this stiffening and denaturing effect, and I am not even thinking of the arrogant ones, but of those bright, tolerant, and able persons who perform successfully, and often with student approval, the prescribed schoolroom and textbook routine. They illuminate, but, for that reason perhaps, they never see the shadow.

No; even these, professors of childhood as they are, would not do. For an adult to enter the region of youth as I am conceiving it here requires a special quality of silence and self-effacement; he must be like William Beebe in his diving suit under the tropical seas, a creature without disturbing vibrations. If one is really desirous of observing and noting the phenomena of youth I doubt if advice of any sort can be given directly, as a superior to an inferior, I mean; and I am sure that admonition, chiding, or punishing has never a chance, nor satire, nor adult smartness at children's expense (usually done in public with withering effect)—that would be as if William Beebe should throw a harpoon into his tranquil fish world.

Some of us have been in that child-world, often only partially in it, wholly in it only at rare intervals, and when we have succeeded it is because we have practiced the slow and self-effacing methods of deep-sea observation. And if our recorded data are at all worthy it is because we have learned to move with incredible slowness; and because we have not once carried a harpoon.

II

Youth power is undoubtedly lost in the language arts by what might be called the harpooning theory of instruction. For years I have sought intimacy with children who have been publicly labeled "poor in English." As a lot they are invariably convinced of their inability, the unanimity of teachers being impressive if the scores in the coldly scientific and impersonal "composition scales" were not sufficient. With natural self-respect, therefore, they expose their written or their spoken product as seldom as possible in the presence of a so-called English teacher.

"Oh, I am no good at English," is a common expression that juts out in familiar conversation, a sign of inward worry, sometimes a pathetic attempt to ward off an interest which, to their way of thinking, could lead to no good result.

"Well," I would often remark, "I am no good at English myself." And somehow I am able to convince them. "I can't spell," I would tell them truthfully; "And I am not over-successful at punctuation. And my first writing is always clumsy; it takes many writings before I can say simple things so that anyone else may understand my meaning."

That interests them, but when I tell of my own school days —so like their own—and of my own inability in my youth to write the kind of English that my teachers demanded, well, that makes me almost one of them. They swim fearlessly about my diving suit, display their beautiful mottled colors, blow their natural bubbles, wave their marvelously graceful fins.

When they write for me, these who are "poor in English," I do not "correct" their papers. I figure that they have had enough of that ritual in the past, and obviously it has not led to grace. Instead, I look for the idea, thought, picture, feeling, argument which they are seeking to convey, and whatever it is, I try to admire it. And usually I can admire it, for, a strange thing at which I have never ceased to wonder, the "poor in English" have often the most alluring things to say. As a rule they are unconventional in their thinking, and often they have a natural gift of invention and an instinctive feeling for art values. Perhaps it is because their earliest teachers, in their proselytizing zeal for conformity, tried to kill that originality with "corrections"; and so these unique youths had learned to scuttle out of sight, thus losing all chance of training. Or it might be that this loss of training was their real gain! Blessed are the poor in English, I am often constrained to say, for they shall see with their own eyes.

So I learned early to look with care into badly written scrawls for that untutored gift of transferring thought, feeling, and image into right words. My earliest discovery, the case that gave me a clue to the principle involved, was found in a well-nigh illiterate welter covering many pages.

A strong feeling had impelled the writer to continue on and on, forgetful for the moment of his deficiencies. Out of it came, as I read, the crude shadow of a stark story; it took me to the French vine country, to a wayside shrine where peasants stopped to bend the knee, cross themselves, water their horses, and gossip; I saw leering, and cringing, and flippant superstition, gross humors of men and beasts; I saw the muck of a swampish pool, the battered figure of the Virgin; and a moment later, through the eyes of a stranger coming back after years to the homeland, I saw his boyhood image of the Pool of Peace at the foot of the Hill of the Lady of Mercy.

With the enthusiastic reception of the idea in his story—there was no word at that time of its bad form—his illiteracy cleared. Without instruction it vanished. It just left him; it was like the miraculous cleansing of conversion. A little later the author appeared in the *Forum*, at that time a symbol of the highest literary excellence. Since then he has found his way into magazines generally; he is the author of a striking novel; he has contributed verse to one of the memorable collections in the modern movement; he has achieved high ranking as an international correspondent. But he was eighteen years of age and had been in school twelve years before a teacher noted his native power.

I am reminded in this connection of the boys among my friends who have left college because they could find no instructor interested in what they had to say but only in how they said it. Form, the clothing of the idea, good manners in words, these represented seemingly the sole interest of their teachers. They had, it seems, the theory of the writers of books of etiquette, by the practice of whose forms, one is led to believe (see advertisements) that one may safely conceal the fact of not having had the experiences of refinement; and yet without such experience. one might ask, how is any refinement possible? But that attitude gives a statuesque immovability to the college instructor; form is a thing that one may note without being moved. "You couldn't move them," one lad remarked, "though you presented them with *The Scarlet Letter*. They don't read to be moved. They are on the Sacred Blunder Hunt."

Another boy said, "I handed in five stories and got a total of ten corrections, three of spelling, one of paragraphing, and six of punctuation. Just proof-reading. I didn't go there to get proof-reading, so I left." Three of these stories I have seen later in print; it is difficult to understand how some human approval could have been avoided. That boy has now two books to his credit, and a third is on the presses!

Among the prose of pupils which is presented in Part Two, commendation comes generously for two stories written by young persons who were so conscious of their faulty English that it well-nigh drove them inarticulate. At first in my presence they grew coldly numb. My plan was to require nothing and to wait. Think again of William Beebe floating quietly—stiller than still as the Germans have it—on his bit of undersea coral. Of two accomplishments that were the eventual outcome, one took two months of waiting, the other took six. As they watched the contented effort of others about them their fears must have lessened and their suppressed hopes and self-belief must have gradually increased, for not once did they see the menacing hand rise, nor even the shadow of a harpoon.

III

And what of the fluent ones? Seemingly they have no bar to the fullest expression of native power? Well, they have, powerful bars, but they are not usually aware of them. In the conventional exercises that adult authority permits they perform satisfactorily and often with the distinction of high grades, honor marks, and other symbols of excellence in conformity. Set long in this groove they soon give over any native power that might really distinguish them from their fellows—and your artist is always so distinguished, his style being his own and like no other mortal creature; indeed, if they continue long to express the common approved pattern they might even come to dislike the invitation to summon from within that rare and nonconforming artist-self. Those who do well in school English seldom become writers.

Success, of the sort we have in mind, does not come easily with such older children as have already achieved the usual adult approval of their output; it is to the younger ones we must turn, those who have not formed too deep an attachment for conventional standards. But even here much time must be given at first to disarm their fears of disapproval; they remember that their past attempts at the expression of native ability have led almost invariably to a quick application of the subtile but powerful machinery of repression.

And then one must set no limits to the kind of thing they would express. This means that we, the elder guides, must prepare ourselves for shocks. Youth has a gift of satire and caricature; he might begin by satirizing or caricaturing—us! His notion of dignity, of respect, of humor, of reverence even, does not correspond invariably with our notion. But if we would bring out and strengthen the best powers that he has we must not stop him here; nor need we presume that he lacks dignity, respect, humor, or reverence even. On the other hand, we must be most careful to treat decently his attempts to show us what to him is worthy of attachment, worthy of his loyalty and his serious attention. It is a platitude that in the realm of his most solemn worships we have made youth the sport of our cruelest jests and even of our superior scorn. To laugh it out of him, to shame it out of him, are our justifying phrases, along with that fast obsolescing phrase, to beat it out of him.

It is a question of the conflict of standards, you see; and I am proposing that in the matter of art expression youth should be permitted to have its own. But first we should open our minds to discover what those standards really are. In my own judgment we shall not find him lacking in the instinct for beauty and for truth; indeed, his power in these age-old fundamentals is often superior to our own.

If permitted, then, he will express himself on many matters from which his elders have commonly debarred him, on love, death,

> Moon, stars, and sun
> kingdoms, galleons, caravans,
> with hell and god and the four archangels

and, if permitted, he will not continue to take our point of view but will venture on his own. To keep to subjects that we select as "proper"—such as "How I Spent My Vacation," or "The Poetry of Matthew Arnold"—and to treat such subjects in the manner that we prescribe, that is the way of imitation, but it is never the way of the artist; it is the way to suppress the powers of youth, not to conserve them. For youth has much to say on "moon, stars, and sun, kingdoms, galleons, caravans," and even on "hell and god and the four archangels"; and having said it he will never be the same youth again; he who once has led can never again be comfortable as the subservient follower, maxims to the contrary notwithstanding. Once the deep vein of originality has been made accessible—and in every normal youth is an untouched El Dorado—the exchange to the poverty of obedient imitation will never be made willingly.

Struck by the unanswerable anguish of death a young girl writes:

CLOCKMAKER'S SONG

Bits of rubies and bits of steel,
Intricate brotherhood of spring and wheel
Ticking away on my mantel shelf,
Clocks that are ornate or pretty or plain,
Ugly, unusual, ugly again,
Each one is mine, for I made it myself.

I oil it and dust it and love it and mind it,
And I never, never forget to wind it.

Another Clockmaker, quite close by,
Has a mantel shelf reaching from sky to sky.
He can make a clock in an ecstasy
Of wild unbridled artistry
And set it down among clocks that are plain
Where it never enters His head again.

And it ticks itself still on His mantel shelf,
For no clock is able to wind itself.

My mantel shelf measures five feet or more
And His is boundless from shore to shore,
But I make my clocks just as carefully,
And each has the same loving care from me—

And in this, perhaps, I am greater than He.

She could not have written so independently, with such calm dignity, unless she had been permitted over many years to express her wise feelings without even the suggestion of the fear of rebuke. We have reason for our assurance that the reverence and understanding which have come to her with the years are all the more lasting and secure because her moment of despair was thus so bravely and honestly faced.

Nor could the following casual contribution to a history lesson (it was Daniel C. Knowlton's class) have been possible unless the classroom environment and the school environment had been for a long period of time friendly to this boy's own sense of cleverness, to his own judgment, and to his own taste:*

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*See page 59.

FOUR EDENS

A MEDIEVAL LEGEND

Saint Peter who in weariness did lean
  Against the seventh wall of chrysolite,
Aroused himself, for yonder could be seen
  Four Medieval men come into sight.

The foremost one, a Lord of high degree,
  Sedately strode him toward the pearly gate
As if this Paradise would only be
  An acquisition to his vast estate.

The second came, a bishop most benign,
  Who, waddling in his velvet finery,
Bore ample proof that partridge broiled with wine
  Was part of conscientious piety.

The third, a serf, whose fate had been to plod,
  On seeing Heaven's ramparts in the sky
Cried out in fear, "There must be serfs of God
  To hoist the lumps of amethyst so high!"

The fourth, a monk, who followed last of all,
  Approached with halting steps, for he was sad
To see that Paradise must have a wall. . . .
  Yes, even as the monastery had!

Saint Peter tipped his halo with respect,
  "Good tidings and a welcome, Sirs," said he,
"What part of Paradise will you select,
  In which to while away Eternity?"

"I sicken of my castle," said the Lord.
  "Give me the simple cottage of a serf,
"And let me dwell with nature," he implored,
  "To reap a frugal living from the turf!"

"My pomp is only fraud," the Bishop said,
  "So let me live a monkish life alone.
"I would forgo my scented feather bed
  "To sleep upon the monastery stone."

The serf, revolting in his feudal yoke,
  Declared, "Good Peter, pray bequeath me this;"
And fingered at the Lord's brocaded cloak;
  "And give me castles on a precipice!"

"The stark privations of my narrow creed,"
  The monk avowed, "are much to my distaste.
"Oh, could I but afford the Bishop's greed,
  And let a partridge swell my sagging waist!"

* * *

As each request was promptly granted then,
  We find ourselves incapable to tell
If these four Medieval gentlemen
  Consigned themselves to Heaven or to Hell.

There are possibilities of shock in each of these contributions, but I happen to know that the adult friends of the two youths, teachers and parents, had agreed long ago to lower their shock exponent measurably, both as a matter of expediency as well as a matter of wisdom.

It is not, I hasten to add, that we adults should not be shocked by youth. The real point is, however, that it is only by permitting youth to err in taste that, under guidance, a healthy taste is arrived at; and it is only by gaining confidence in what powers he has that youth may grow in power. We think it better to have even the worst side of youth exposed to us, who are professionally trained in guidance, than to have it concealed from us and thereby develop into a possible social evil.

We might here put to vote a specific illustration of a debatable matter of taste. Should we or should we not receive the following parody with welcoming laughter? One set of adults shook their heads when another set of adults voted to print it; here, you see, is division among the elders, but youth received the ditty with a unanimous shout of acclaim.

One needs to know only that the school had suffered an epidemic of fudge parties, wherein each hostess had fabricated her own experimental brand. From a convalescent couch, therefore, a young girl wrote:

O! OH! O!

O bowl, I cannot hold thee close enough!
  Thy smooth white porcelain rim,
  Thy contents somewhat grim,
And I, this summer day, that ache and sag
And all but cry with anguish, a limp rag,
  Bowl, bowl, I cannot get thee close enough!

Long have I known that something had gone wrong,
  But never knew I this!
  Here such upheaval is
As retcheth me apart—Lord, I do fear
Thou'st made good fudge too plentiful this year!
  My soul is all but out of me . . . let fall
  No clattering thing . . . prithee, let no friend call!

Equally diverting examples could be given of other attitudes that normally are repressed by the standards of mature dignity and good taste: celebrations of sincere self-love; of love for others, sometimes brotherly and sometimes not; of philosophical probings disturbing to the orthodox. Among these one is sure to find pictures of villains done with ironic pretense of sympathy—the irony and the pretense are usually missed by literal elders—as witness:

ANCHORITE

Time is elusive;
I do not waste it
toiling to aid and serve
a thankless universe

But, as a heedless Nero
oblivious to all,
I play my squeaky fiddle
in a burning world.

Or this, from a very nice young girl whom one never would suspect, to look at her, of letting her fancy flirt with the idea—and with more than the idea!—of a temporary lapse from constancy:

COUNTER ATTRACTION

My bonny lies over the ocean!
My bonny lies over the sea!
(Ahem!)
I'm sick of long-distance emotion,
So—meet me at Huyler's at three.

Among my dear friends are lovely sentimentalists who glorify the American child and will not permit him to display his age-old mind. They smile and speak of "the dear little soul." Right before the dear little soul, too; who often rages within while outwardly placid. None of the inner life do they ever see, except that of those who still remain infantile. The intelligent satire of active youth, their marginal comment on life, their footnotes of drollest imaginings, these they simply know nothing about. With all their gentle charm, however, those sentimentalists are powerful persons; rigorously they suppress the slightest sign of maturity in the young, but without a single slip of that everlasting smile.

Once or twice, however, I have seen that smile fade, an accusing horror taking its place. When one exhibits the astonishingly mature work of the so-called dear little souls—brought to the surface through months of permittings—they raise the accusation of falsifying child life. They do not understand at all the theory of permittings. Frankly they say "A child would never think such things, if someone did not suggest them to him." They are honest, of course, in this belief, for they have never observed the workings of the mind of intelligent children; and having never themselves had the experience, they are sure the thing does not exist.

One day, after a satiric play staged by children, we were gently but roundly called to account by one of our best friends on the staff. We were accused of "putting things into innocent children's heads." Naturally it stirred us in the same way as that other argument, that we who come upon these child-powers have some special trick or gift. We immediately retold the accusation to the children, an imprudent thing to do, of course. My friend, our opponent, would never have believed what those dear souls said in reply! Even I had to flee the room. Some shred of professional ethics remained in me!

Once the strong personality within one of those dear souls gets really functioning at the surface, the last thing the adult guide thinks of is of "suggesting" anything except both feet on the brakes; meanwhile he is himself too frightened to do much else besides a clutch at the steering wheel and a punch on the horn!

One of the best teachers of younger children writes, "Each morning on my way to school I say, 'They shall not run me! They *shall* not run me!' God knows I do not run them!"

IV

It is in an environment where power is being experimented with that the richer contributions of youth may find a way to concrete expression. We know to the full the limiting and damning effect of "Don't"; some of us are courageous enough to try the possibilities of "Do." And the first fruits of our trial are, we believe, only prophetic of the good that is to come. In design and color the results are little short of astounding;* and we match the brush artist with the artistry of the poet. Even in the elementary school, pupils are performing the slow labors of actual research in history

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*See that remarkable collection, *Creative Expression Through Art*, published by the Progressive Education Association, Washington, D.C. And, as well, the beautiful display in *Creative Effort*, vol viii, in the published studies of the Francis Parker School, Chicago, Illinois.

and in science; they are also artificers of no mean skill in wood, clay, and metal; music becomes a living part of them;* and in all their getting they seem to be getting a kind of wisdom that, if general, would reshape the world we live in.

The function of the school in this new discovery of latent powers is first, as has been suggested here, to remove the traditional bar of unfruitful suppression in order to get the mental set that will permit the hidden powers their freest exercise, but equally essential is its compelling duty to present the inviting materials upon which these powers may work to the best advantage. Mere freedom is not enough.

The teacher must furnish a right world to work in. Because of what she brings, the very appearance of the classroom will change, along with much of the mechanism of verbal recitation and verbal drill and verbal examination that has in the past characterized and labeled the institution called the school.

Drudgery there will be in plenty, and therefore she, this new teacher, must be there to control and guide it; and straining to reach ideals and disappointment in failure and new starts and failures again, and therefore she must be there to tide over the rough places; the impulses that govern this unceasing energizing will be self-engendered because she is present to keep them so;† the stimulation to never-ending effort will arise out of an environment in material, in suggestion, in individual and group contribution, which is organized and directed by the teacher.

And all this she will do in ways that are so wise and so unobtrusive that youth will welcome her as a necessary part of his daily life, and not, alas so frequently, as a necessary evil.

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*All of Satis N. Coleman's books are full of this, especially *Creative Music in the Home* (Myers).

†"Had a child not been the one to suggest making a play city, the suggestion would have come from the teacher in such a way as to make the city a spontaneous piece of work." From *Curriculum Studies in the Second Grade*, by Katharine L. Keelor, Teachers College Publications, Columbia University.

Furthermore, she will have a clear vision of ultimate educational outcomes not even guessed by the boys and girls in her school workshop. These ends may be as remote as the making of a tolerant, informed citizenry, or as near as an assembly demonstration to vivify and fix essential meanings of daily endeavor; it may be as hard to define as the awakening of a delight in a better literature than these children have yet cared for, or as practical as preparatory training for a hated but unavoidable College Board examination. Beyond child interest, beyond even a care for the creative powers of the individual, she must know what she is driving at; know professionally, I mean.

Back of such a teacher who is guiding the seemingly irrelevant interests of the hour toward the goal of an informed and able adulthood is the administrator, without whom her work may never point intelligently at all. Against that same vision of individual and social outcomes he must be capable of measuring the worth of every school activity. He must be familiar professionally, therefore, with the techniques for discovering the individual and social worth of educational materials, for measuring and for diagnosing that will save labor for the teacher and conserve the time and energy of her charges.

In the matter of this kind of professional ability I see no difference between the new school and the old. A subject-matter teacher or a child-interest teacher who has no notion of educational outcomes beyond the hour or the semester is as ineffective and dangerous as a physician who prescribes by routine, ignoring the individual case before him, or who prescribes at random, trusting to the law of chances and nature's clever gift for curing.

Our attack upon the old system is mainly against the dominating position of its unthinking routinists; but we all know that under a teacher of educational vision, a teacher who comprehended the ultimate individual and social implications of his subject, formal education has been often thrillingly alive and powerfully effective in awakening right desire, stirring at those times the very roots of the creative life. To have come within the influence of such persons, rare, alas, though they be, was to become in some sense forever scientist or historian, mathematician, linguist, or literateur. Not the subject matter, nor the logical arrangement in course of study or in textbook, performed those subtile transformations, for other teachers used the same materials without the same effects; the constant factor was always the teacher of sympathetic vision who used his subject, not as an end in itself, but as a means toward those larger ends which he alone was wise enough to comprehend.

The conservation of youth power is one of the platforms of the new school program; it awaits only the coming in larger force of the new type of administrator who will give approval to the new type of teacher with her new type of classroom technique. These differently adjusted persons will not arrive in plenteous numbers, however, until we cease choosing teachers entirely from the good scholar class; nor so long as we insist that the only test of good administration is ability to do research.

Though we will have none but Masters of Arts in our first grades, that will not guarantee possession of the art of caring for the life-roots of your six-year-old child and mine. A superintendent is not necessarily preparing himself for the highest professional achievement, although we force him to quit his job and give the most productive years of his life to, say, a fact-finding thesis in which he computes, for the *x* and *z* groups in ten selected urban first-grade classes, the varying co-efficients of correlation among such disparate data as loose buttons, I. Q., and the lower quartile media of tests in the nine table.

If that last exercise seems too learned, incredible, and preposterous as a requirement of qualification for a public school administrator, I could exhibit genuine ones which, to use the language of Alice, are learneder, incredibler, and preposterouser.

Chapter XXI

ALL GOD'S CHILLUN

My choice of chapter title was "All God's Chillun Got Wings" until I remembered that all God's chillun are not permitted to use them. I visit many schools which, in spite of a modern cheerfulness and a seeming acquiescence of pupils, are to me places where the wings of God's children are gradually and painlessly removed. High marks are given to them who know least about flying; future advancement is open only to those to keep their feet always on the ground. When the creative spirit strives here and there to flutter, it becomes an activity that must be practiced in stealth, rarely with full approval of the authorities.

The creative spirit is something more than a product in print, clay, canvas: it is dancing, rhythmic living, a laugh, a flash of the mind, strength of control, swiftness of action, an unwritten poem, a song without words; it is life adding its invisible living cells to more and abundant life. But these products, picture, poem, clay figure, which we show in our public exhibits, will serve; however inadequate they are for us, for our eager interest is rarely on the product, we use them to tempt the unbeliever to loiter a moment at the shrine of the true gods. Our argument may not move him, but the grace of our service may win him into the faith.

To the unbeliever, then, I address myself when I would tell of the creative spirit and its varied manifestations; and also, of course, to those who believe but would have their faith strengthened.

The creative impulse is more easily observed in young children, but the housewife who bakes unerringly without book or recipe knows it; the carpenter fashioning a cupboard to his own notion of shape and line, the office man given free sway in the phrasing of a sales advertisement, the lawyer playing upon the mood of judge and jury, these practice it without knowing it; my true love's letter is the perfect product of instinctive artistry; all our adult ways of interacting one with another, in short, call on the creative spirit, and our life is artistic or dull in proportion to our creative gifts.

But adults are in the main wingless; convention, tribal taboos, mechanistic living, long years of schooling, something has stilled the spirit within or walled it securely. It is to children we must go to see the creative spirit at its best; and only to those children who are in some measure uncoerced.

Outwardly it is harmony; a unity of eye, hand, bodily muscles, mind; a concentration upon the object of desire that sets the world aside. It is frequently balked by the need of special information or of special skill; these are the obstructions that it must surely overcome or the heart's desire is not achieved and the spirit dies; these, too, are the strategic places where the wise teacher is at hand with just the right assistance. But of that later; the outward picture concerns us now. Not only is there harmony of mind and body, but there is the closest connection between the thing conceived as worthy to be done and the media necessary—brush, paint, wood, metal, clay, musical instruments, blocks, script, tool, machine.

It flourishes, of course, in what we call play, but mindful of our religious inheritances, in which play has been conceived as touched with evil, I hasten to note concrete illustrations of play that has taken on all the characteristics of work: a butterfly collection occupying five steady years which brought technical knowledge of family and species, of habitat, environment, breeding, and culture, a correspondence with other collectors and with foreign sales agents, and an ability to present orally to an assembly of several hundred children and adults the serious business of preparing such a collection and to lead the discussion that followed with the skill of experience; a study of biological specimens that led an elementary school boy first to museums and then to summer school (Wood's Hole) until all unwittingly the avocation put him so far outside the rôle of pupil that an ornithologist and later a marine biologist claimed that they must talk to the lad as a colleague and defer to him in his special scientific field; an elementary school boy who constructed photostatic apparatus and motion-picture cameras from lard cans found on the village refuse pile and from odds and ends picked up at rummage sales; a young artist who built herself a five-thousand-dollar studio through a persistently applied scheme of savings, earning, and commercial borrowings.

Illustration of such activity is at hand in every classroom including the college classroom, if one has the skill to look for it. The right kind of scholarship is always creative artistry.

The common ingredient in each case, that which makes it different from formal instruction, is that the "urge to do" is self-engendered; it seeks its own way to fulfilment; it is not stopped by time, space, apparatus, or by teachers or school administrators, although because of the last two it may often conceal every outward trace of interest in the thing that occupies the main tracts of the mind, in this regard behaving like a conquered people in the presence of the ruling race.

It may even at these times assume a cautious stupidity; for neither to the unsympathetic nor to the arrogant and unfeeling will it confess an interest in the inner dream. Under unfriendly questioning it may even deny, and thus, through clumsiness and inexpertness, get into the coil of adult morality.

II

When the creative spirit is at work, not only are body and mind coöperating with instinctive harmony to secure the desired result, but the language art is functioning at a high degree of excellence. A child may speak haltingly in classroom recitation, or in a school "composition" may write with despairing inadequacy, who, in the midst of a bit of self-initiated artistry, the making of a toy motor boat, a radio set, a cartoon, or a play, will talk with the effectiveness of an inspired expert. In his own language and idiom, of course, and provided you do not bring with you the flavor of the impossible linguistic standards of adult perfection.

You may ask questions then, if you are not of the forbidding sort; and if you have an ear for right rhythmic speech you may have cause to marvel at the language sense that these youngsters really have; and you may wonder why we as teachers do not take advantage of the gifts that children have in this line instead of damming—both spellings apply here—their utterance through our insistence on the use of an alien tongue.

The claim for "lessons" and "home assignments" is that they teach persistence, but who can equal the persistence of children when engaged in creative work? Ask the mothers and fathers who have tried to keep up with the demands of their offspring for continuous attention to a loved story or game! And the work which they set for themselves is not stopped by the ending of the day; it carries over, day after day, until the accomplished end is reached.

The astonishing paintings by second-grade children which decorate Katharine Keelor's room were not done at a sitting. Day by day they grew. She has just told me the history of one remarkable water color of an autumn orchard, how the house and the trees and the far-off hills came slowly to their present places in the picture, and then one morning a shy voice confided, "I was thinking about it last night in bed, so I put some apples on the tree as well as on the ground, for, of course, they all wouldn't have fallen off, would they? And the red apples are so pretty I wanted more of them."

A teacher has just dropped in to tell me of a remarkable speech delivered from a most unexpected source at a recent Lincoln Day assembly. "It was done with such ease and masterfulness," he said, "with the modesty of a trained speaker, and yet it was the boy's first serious public appearance. We found out that he had been at work for weeks in various libraries. He had concentrated on a bibliography that no teacher would have had the heart to give anyone as an assignment, even in the old days; and no one knew he was at it! He saturated himself with material like an expert research student, and then calmly talked out of full knowledge. The school is so thrilled by it that they are thinking of naming him for the most responsible position in the vote of the pupils, chairman of the Student Council, a most coveted office, I tell you, and never held but by the all-around best man in the place!"

"And no one knew he was at it!" That is a quality that must not be missed, in which regard these young artists are one with the older artist. The same artist-shyness is here, the same fear of spoiling the picture through the wrong word from outside; even suggestions, the artist knows, are dangerous until the work is finished.

And flattery can knock one out of the humor—shatter the inspiration—as well as dispraise, or stupid misunderstanding, or nagging (parents and teachers, elder sisters and governesses, please take notice!), or that unfeeling looking-over-the-shoulder which has dished many a promising canvas. Artists and children hide from onlookers until enough of the work is done to insure a possible completion (that's why they should have their own rooms, studios, workshops). They perform cheerfully enough among their own kind; so in some schools the artistic work is done out of hours, and teachers never hear of it; but in the schools that respect the creative life, one senses that the artist has been protected from the cold eye of the outsider.

"I'm painting that red barn," I heard a Woodstock celebrity once say to a group of gushing ignorants, "but if you ask me what I am painting I shall have to go fishing for a week." He was bitter with a sense of outrage at their unfeeling impertinence in hovering over him, but all they said was, "Isn't he just *screamingly* funny! And don't you *love* it! It *is* the barn you're painting, isn't it? I'm just *crazy* about it!" And as he folded up his work he remarked hopelessly, "I'm off! Fishing it is!"

But at the right moment they want praise like any other artist. Or, rather, they want what the artist-student calls a "crit." "Oh," cried one of Miss Keelor's little boys, "you didn't hang mine up!" It was a moment of real torture. Miss Keelor brought the painting out slowly (while, no doubt, she thought hard) and looked at it again. "I didn't think it had enough in it," she explained, but not with an air of really knowing. "So much space here," she mused, and then looked at the pictures of the others. He looked, too, and understood. "I could do some more!" He caught the idea eagerly, explaining spiritedly new thoughts that began to come to him with a rush. And away he went, satisfied with the judgment.

And at other times, just like real artists, they are dismayed at praise. You hang their pictures; they are grieved. "It is not good enough," they say in real distress and go sturdily to work to make a better one to take its place.

III

This, then, is the torrential force that comes unbidden out of the mysterious recesses of personality and fashions things out of wood, color, fabric, clay, sound, and words; the thing that dances, sings, leads a dozen dramatic reincarnations; the thing that drives a small child into profound research or sets him digging into a difficulty with the energy of a dog at a woodchuck hole; whose ways are sure, whose outcome is beauty.

Not that I would say that the conscious end is beauty. Children seem to be driven by an inner necessity of putting forth something; that it shall turn out to be beautiful is not their concern. Their impulse at its best is to place something in the outside world that is already (or almost ready) in their inside world of perceiving, thinking, feeling; they measure their success or failure by the final resemblance of the thing done to the thing imagined.

In their best moments they seem to know exactly what to do: the muscles ripple in perfect harmony to the right touch, line, blow; in painting, the brush is swung fearlessly and surely, in pottery the punches and patches are thumbed without hesitation. In this regard they are in tune again with the professional artist. Experience has loosened his fears; he trusts his instinct for level, balance, the swift adjustings of his medium and his materials to satisfy those flashing demands from within.

One needs to emphasize here that the modern discovery of the child as artist—a very ancient bit of knowledge, of course—is coincident with the realization of the beauty of primitive art generally. The child is a genuine primitive. He needs little or no instruction, but he must have materials, and his surroundings must be such as to call his effort worthy; he is susceptible to condemnation and will give up all his precious art and lose one of the most gracious of nature's gifts—for, alas, it may be easily lost—if his overlords command. The art of the uncivilized tribes, ancient and modern, is just that untutored art of our own children. And it is fitting, now that we are treasuring every trace of the craft of the primitive peoples, the native art in Africa, Mexico, Egypt, the South Seas, it is fitting that our educational leaders should be rediscovering with joy and understanding the work of our own young "natives."

The undeniable result, however, is beauty; and fortunately we do not in these days need to justify it. Here and there, to be sure, its utility is questioned; but the sense of its importance in American life is growing at such bounds that we no longer worry over the eventual result. Some further argument is necessary, however, to meet the demands of those ascetics, often in power in education, who still have faith in information, in assigned tasks, in "the discipline of artificial difficulty" and other fading theories of the way of life.

Those of us who have watched young life grow from dependent insecurity to independent power through the opportunities for the cultivation of the spirit which the newer schools afford, are assured that something ever so much more important than a beautiful product is the result of the new freedom in education. Personality develops with the springing certainty of a dry seed dropped into moist earth. Character emerges; and with it knowledge, a kind of wisdom, so sure in its judgments as to make us listen and attend rather than command and instruct. Taste is never, as with us, a hypocrisy. Confidence comes into the spirit and thrives there, for fear and bewilderment—the acknowledged tools of the older education—never yet begot faith in oneself. New hungers arise, new desires, new satisfactions, and these are the very food of education.

The cultivation of the creative spirit makes for great artists, giant scholars, and thinkers; it is the recipe for distinction.

The story of the leaders of the race is the story of those who cultivated the creative spirit in spite of the schools. Why is it, I wonder, that we have never taken that lesson to heart? The masters of men have ever refused formal education, or they have revolted, or they have evaded instruction, or have cleverly turned it to their own uses. But these are the strong of will who have fought their way to the right to be free. The mass has not been strong of will: a little fluttering of the wings, and then an acceptance—that is their story.

The newer education is learning the uses of the mysterious forces of the spirit through which one may literally educate oneself for all the important needs of living. It is like the heartbeat: no one has found the source of its power but no one doubts that the source is within us. The creative spirit is another heart; it will keep us alive if we give it a chance to beat for us; it may be stilled, but there is then no more life.

IV

Education is at last taking note of the natural creative impulses. At present it is experimenting, and the results are good; it has no assured technique as yet, but the beginnings are in sight. There is a general agreement that the school life should be free from arrogant authorities; that the teachers should be guides rather than instructors, and that these should be learning about children rather than certain about children; that the school environment should be rich in suggesting material for the creative impulses, and that the unfolding of the best personality should be watched and noted as important rather than "marks" in assigned home tasks called "lessons."

When we meet, those of us who have dealt with children on this side of their nature, we talk a different jargon from the professional pedagogue because our classrooms are set to another rhythm than that of our more military brothers; nor do we speak so despairingly of the work of school children; rather we ply one another with this and that astonishing product of their effort. Information we do not prize so much—"the world is so full of a number of things!"—nor the "skills" that one will supposedly need at maturity (mostly very bad guesses, as any textbook thirty years old will abundantly testify); nor are we much attracted by the prevailing drill psychology ("Force them to do it a certain number of times and they will continue to do it joyfully for life") which we are apt to classify flippantly with the claim of the New England catechism as a formula for insuring the pious life. In this connection I am reminded of the illiterate Kentucky mountaineers in the Army whom we insisted upon teaching to shoot from the shoulder; with the gun at the hip these lads could pick the whiskers off a bouncing rabbit!

We dispute in the most friendly and heated manner when we meet, for we are very much concerned that no mistakes shall be made in a matter so vital to human kind. One group of "progressives," for instance, believes so much in "growth theory" that it will hardly permit any instruction at all. It banks all upon Nature. With these "naturalists" some of us have delightful disputes. Nature is wonderful, as all the poets tell us, but we, some of us, don't trust her altogether. She is a powerful jinn to summon, and also a lusty, sly wench. We must make Nature work for us, that is our contention; but, of course, we should know what help and what interference we may expect of her.

Because of having written a book on the poetry of youth I am in constant receipt of sheaves of bad poetry from all parts of the country. "See what my children have done without any instruction whatever!" is the tenor of the accompanying letters. My pity goes out to the children; so obviously have they needed someone to be by to point out the way. Not to tell them what to say! Heaven and Poesy forbid! But they never should have been allowed, I say as I read, to continue to write in the style of yesteryear, and even in the style of the year before yesteryear; and their copyings, their hackneyed phrasing, and their silly platitudes should have been gently made known to them—an art of teaching required here that is nothing but the highest.

If growth under pleasantly free surroundings were all of the new education, then my occupation is gone; for I conceive of my professional skill as something imperatively needed to keep that growth nourished.

Notably is this true of drawing, painting, and color work generally. Children do very good work, and they do very bad work. If no one is by to suggest to them the difference they may never grow in taste, in discriminating art judgment. Nature, the jade, may or may not help them. They may even turn away from the sure voice of the instinctive creative spirit within them to copy the work of others or, worse, to copy themselves.

The teacher must know enough to entice them into the right road. And just any teacher will not do; scholarship here is a smoky flare, and the diploma, Master of Pedagogy, is not exactly enlightening. Children, for example, are often too satisfied; then they need an immediate experience with a better than they have hitherto known. Nothing so surely disgusts one with poor work as a goodish experience with something better.

But it must not be too much better. (At this point the standardized teacher presents the "classics" in literature and in the fine arts, with the usual classic result.) The newer type of teacher, herself always more artist than teacher, knows the better, really knows it for what it does to one; and she knows how to place it in the child's life so that—most important!—it may be wholly acceptable.

Further, children are balked by difficulties in the handling of materials, how to make an effective linoleum block, for instance, or what to do with color that changes when brought into contact with other colors; they want to know the uses of crayon, charcoal, grease pencil, India ink, fixatives, the mechanics of enlarging illustrations for the printer, and so on endlessly. It is the new business of the teacher to provoke children into wanting to know about these and other varying matters, and then to provide materials and such help as is asked for.

Growth is not enough, nor is environment enough, unless, as I believe it should be, the teacher is considered an essential part of the environment. Richer results may be expected of children than the standardized schoolmaster has hitherto considered possible; richer results may be expected from those even who are leading the way in the progressive schools; and that richness will come no faster, I suspect, than the coming in greater numbers of the gifted artist-teacher.

Something Greek is coming back to education; for the beauty and the power of the Hellenes were always a result of self-cultivation in taste, never a slavery to information; they danced, sang, talked endlessly, tuned the body and mind to its best rhythms, and through these intangibles they probed the limits of human understanding; but they did not know that the earth is a globe, nor were they concerned that the chief city of Madagascar is Antananarivo.

The key-word, so far as the schools are concerned, is environment rather than lessons. Lessons do draw out the spirit of many, especially those of the scholarly type, but a skilfully set-up environment, as the teachers in the progressive schools are now well aware, will do general magic, will start a moving creative spirit in the least hopeful, will well-nigh "draw three souls out of one weaver"!

Information and knowledge are always of secondary importance in education and are so conceived by the best minds. It is the pedant and not the true scholar who has elevated them to ends-in-themselves. The leaders in education understand this distinction, and they know that it is pertinent to higher as well as to elementary training. In a recent address before the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York President Lowell of Harvard University said:

> The cultivation of the mind by the colleges is an attempt to train the imagination to grasp things that cannot be felt or perceived by the material senses. It is not merely to give knowledge.
>
> *The real thing we want is not knowledge but resourcefulness.* The art which creates things both great and small is not the capacity for solving problems. That may seem a curious statement, but the real art of life consists in finding out what is the question to be solved, and the person who can find out what the problem is to be solved is the man who really makes the contributions to life.
>
> *It is comparatively easy to train anyone to solve problems* when they are stated; but the man who can see a new problem and state it is the man who makes the real advance, and that is true in everything. You all know perfectly well that *the man you want in your business is the man who will perceive something that needs to be done and has not been done;* and then the question of finding out how to do it is comparatively simple.

V

We talk of these and other matters when we meet professionally, but we consider it no particular justification of our work that the "free children" surpass the controlled children not only in an enlarged and gifted personality but in the customary school branches. Superintendent Washburne of the Winnetka Schools has the proof, if anyone is interested. We note the fact, to be sure, because of its influence upon parents and upon the powers that control educational organization and administration. We may win our argument by way of the results in the standardized tests—and we do not despise winning our argument—but our main interest lies not there but in the sure knowledge we possess of the effect of our sort of education upon the mind and spirit of youth.

When interest is properly motivated the acquisition of fruitful knowledge cannot be denied. I have watched primary school children carry on research in book and in museum that could be dignified by the name of science, requiring an amassing of data, judgment in selection of material, and a functional use of that material in coöperative groups, while the outcomes were thrilling in lasting information about the present and the past of the world we live in. I am acquainted with Latin classes whose students really know Latin, an accomplishment acquired by the steadiest kind of "digging," but it irritates some folks when they discover that a skilful school organization has succeeded in motivating that study in terms of delight.

We are all familiar with the college laggards who turn into incontrovertible "grinds" when they at last find their life work in law school, medical or engineering school. In certain large machine and electric corporations many of my young friends are giving their nights and days ungrudgingly to the lowest, dirtiest, and poorest paid tasks; they stick to their jobs willingly and without skirking because they intelligently conceive that that is the only way to a mastery of the complex informations and skills of that industry; and they are motivated further by comprehending the eventual outcomes in future managerial and sales functions.

Anyone who knows from practical experience what this generation of youth may be won to perform in the region of mere knowledge, will not sneer at our technique as "soft pedagogy." The spirit that drove Edison and his kind to a life-long endeavor in intelligently motivated toil is our spirit; it does not balk at sensible difficulties nor is it eventually uninformed.

The greatest success of the creative approach is that it has put the tools of knowledge into the eager hands of youth. Reversing the situation of the fact-driver of the old school —one cannot think of the old driver without his whip—our position as teacher has often been one of worry lest our stimulation should carry a youth to a continuation of school tasks beyond his physical limit of endurance. When groups have begun a genuinely self-motivated drive it has seriously been our problem to stop them for the imperative needs of outdoor play; and often we have been in secret conference with parents to devise counteracting motivation to keep a lad from working into the hours that should be given to rest and sleep.

And it is simply inexperience or bad thinking that quarrel with us, as some of the older pedagogues do, on the charge that we are neglecting the acquisition of the world's heritage of useful knowledge. No single person can be the repository of all the knowledges of civilization. From the time of Plato's pilot the facts that keep the world together have been distributed among many special groups. It must be so in the nature of things. The folly of formal education has always been its attempt to crowd everything into the curriculum.

Chapter XXII

YOUTH CALLS TO YOUTH

FOLLOWING the plan of *Creative Youth*, which contained an extensive illustration of the poetry that came forth during our experiment in creative education, we present, as the second part of this volume, a varied selection from the prose.

As this type of material bulks so large we have restricted ourselves to work that seems to come from the creative life of the individual; therefore it will be natural and youthlike, with no conscious attempt either to imitate an adult form or even to please adults. Further, we have taken an equal contribution from boys and girls and have distributed the selections fairly evenly among the four traditional high-school years. Just to show that we are concerned little with those classifications which so seriously occupy the time of the Tweedle Brothers, we have included the dramatic monologue *You*, which might be free verse or a poem in prose. Our own notion is that it is simply prose which uses, for excellent reasons of movement, emphasis, and eye appeal, the line form of verse.

These stories and familiar essays were voluntary contributions to the school magazine. Not one was ever a school assignment. In their progress toward their present form they were, to be sure, subject to a teacher's criticism, and often they served as topics of group discussion; but they are not the result of tasks imposed. Some of them were printed in a pamphlet, *Lincoln Verse, Story and Essay*, whose object was to show how a school magazine may be used to bring out latent ability and to guide it to creditable achievement; but the prime object of presenting them here is for the stimulating power they will have upon others of the same age. Youth calls to youth with an inspiriting influence which we elders can never hope to match.

The limited pamphlet was so swiftly absorbed by teachers in other schools that we were led to make inquiries as to its use. The almost unanimous answer was that it had become the most thumbed book in the classroom; that pupils had gone to it, every type of pupil, the literary and the inarticulate ones, with an almost greedy interest; and that rereadings did not seem to diminish that interest.

Many teachers and parents told us that it had awakened inspiration among boys and girls who had not hitherto found themselves; that nearly always after a reading would come an attempt at personal composition. We asked particularly if the results seemed imitative. Hardly ever, was the usual response. Evidently the creative life itself had been touched, whose vibrations are always unique.

We believe there is a point here for teachers and parents who are interested in stimulating in the young the impulse for creative writing. Books written by adults, even the best of them, do not seem to have the powerful suggestive power to the creative life of youth that the good work of their actual youthful contemporaries has. "These pieces of writing," they seem to say to themselves, "were done by boys and girls just like me; written because they wanted to write; done the way they wanted to do them. I have things of my own I want to write about. In my own way, too. They must have had fun doing it, Why shouldn't I?"

Provoking the creative impulse to bestir itself in this way is undoubtedly of great importance, but the greater dangers of disappointment must be faced in all frankness. We admit that it is quite possible for almost any high-school boy or girl to duplicate the simple originality of the stories and essays in this collection, but without some guidance it might not be possible at all. Let me give what help I can here by showing how we restricted the output in some instances and how we drew the work out in others.

Our first contributions were simply imitations of the work of adults, to all of which we refused to warm. The early imaginative prose was spurious, founded upon no promptings of the creative life; its source was, indeed, quite often outside of any life at all in the "latest fiction." We reserved our excitement for their use of the only life they really knew something about; and again we trotted out our favorite criterion that their best work would be like nobody else's best work because it would be founded upon their individual interpretation of the world about them and within them; that, therefore, it would be "something that never happened in the world before."

After a deal of waiting this had the fine result of driving the youngsters into a reflection upon their personal experiences. A considerable portion of our own energy at this period was spent with individuals in making them believe that the everyday happenings of their own lives were alive, dramatic even, interesting to others and worthy of serious portrayal. I told them endless stories out of my own everyday life, just to show them how one could extract the moving thing out of seemingly trivial events. "Something is always happening to you," they would say, often with the suggestion that I was adept at the long bow. "Something always is," would be my retort; and then I would show them by a concrete instance how I had taught myself to watch for that "something."

They had no trouble in seeing the point in the old newspaper yarn about the young reporter, returning from his "cover" of a fashionable wedding, who had announced to his editor, "No story. The groom didn't show up."

Those who had had other experiences than that of mere school life were, of course, strongly invited to make use of them. Some had been abroad, for instance; one had lived for a year in Constantinople; one was in the Army with her parents; another had spent a long period on an Arizona ranch; another had visited the Pueblo Indians at Santo Domingo; one had had a year at a boarding school. Our scenes, then, were those we knew something about; our characters were those we had really met and understood; our opinions and points of view grew out of a personal contact with living.

All these prose compositions are marked, therefore, with the stamp of assurance. One leans timidly upon no outside authority when one quotes from experience. Note how casually and surely the young writer speaks of lafayettes and pilot fish in schools of hundreds, of the great shoal of blue fish snapping at the fleeing menhaden, of metal squids, gunwale, and tiller, the beach guard at the sculls. The army youngster writes unerringly of the C.O., the bronze discharge button, the guard house, the bugle salute to the colors. The shriveled life of Miss Meachim, guide and protector of alien boarding-school girls, is almost sickening in its authenticity. That boy's accurate notetaking on the careless indolence of a school-scheduled class-meeting comes out of life. The horses in a Southwest corral, the Pueblos dancing in the sand storm, the younger brothers bedeviling the older sister and her girl friends, these are characterizations that may not be doubted.

No man can write until he knows what he is writing about. Really knows, not as information merely but as something lived until it has become a part of him. Each individual has a region, small or large, upon which he may speak with authority; and by judicious cultivation this region may be enormously enlarged. Each person, in other words, has a story to tell; and, most fortunate for teachers if they could only be made aware of it, it is the only story which the world is really eager to hear. To discover that purple land is the finest help a teacher of the written word may give to youth. The test of having found it is always in the outcomes, as we exhibit abundantly in Part Two: solid ground, real persons moving inevitably right, comment touched with authoritative knowledge, a mature assurance in the telling.

One must know, further, that only a few of these contributions sprang full-armed from the head of their creator. Several of them were at the start but single paragraphs. That is where the watchful guide comes in. He should have a keen scent for the big thing concealed in a few pictured sentences.

One of the best stories in this collection began with a paragraph or two which rest now in its very middle! In that instance I went back eagerly for more. "What happened before this?" When I had obtained what happened before this I went back, with even more eagerness, to ask, "But what happened afterward?" And when I had found out what happened afterward I was able to say: "Do you know, you've got the beginnings of a good story here! But at this spot you sum up a great scene in a sentence. Isn't there more, really, than just that?" A voluble recital of the details of the great scene followed. "Quick!" I cried. "Write it down, just the way you told it, conversation and all, before it gets cold. That is rich! Alive! Scribble it on any old paper, and we'll insert it in the final good copy." Several other "great scenes" were magnified in exactly the same way. We pinned them together, or pasted bits here and there; it was a "mess," as the author insisted joyfully, before we had that fair copy finally rolled out into its wonderful length. "Phew!" the author cried, after a two-days' typing, "I didn't know I'd written so much!"

This process takes a tremendous amount of time, but I prize it as the best method in my repertoire for enticing the creative spirit to do its utmost and for teaching the youthful possessor how to make it work for him. But note, that at no time does the guide suggest what should be written; he merely asks for pictured and dramatic expandings of abstract statements or of those summaries of experiences which the amateur is prone to give as a substitute for experience itself.

II

Here, I see, I must give away another from my bag of tricks, but I hesitate, for two reasons; first, it might not be so effective with youngsters if they should see how it works, and, second, the disclosure always makes some nice lady teacher very angry indeed. I never do know why, but often they scold me when I talk about it, or they sit stiff at a meeting and walk out in a huff. All of which is disturbing to a sensitive soul whose main aim in life is to please women and children. But duty is paramount; the soul, as always, must suffer.

You have waylaid a youngster in the hall, let us say, with the news that he *has* something, a big story, in the few limp paragraphs you thrust at him. You question swiftly about "what went on before" and "what went on afterward"; and he catches the contagion and begins to stir. Now, if you are a good fisher of men you will recognize that distinct disturbance known as the "stir"; but you must wait until you are sure of it. When you are certain that that lad or lass will not rest night or day, other lessons or no other lessons, until the volcano inside has been relieved by a flow of hot words, then—you say this in an excited undertone of the utmost intimacy: "Don't bother for a minute about spelling, capitals, or commas and semicolons. Get that stuff out and down on paper while it is still hot! Scribble! Say everything, whether it belongs or not. Don't stop to think even. We'll fix all that up afterwards. I've got a couple of castors full of commas and semicolons. We'll sprinkle 'em all over it—after it is good and done. Like a broiled steak! Don't you bother about any of that; I'm good enough at it for both of us—professional pepperer and salter, that's me! Away with you and—scribble!"

And later you do salt and pepper it for him right before his excited nose. As you edit it for commas and semicolons and quotation marks you show him why you do it. Show him, remember. Not send him off to fight it out with a cold textbook, hardly any of which is written with an understanding of the sublime ignorance of children. Show him. Not scold him, nag him, intimidate him. Show him.

Even the showing, however, is not done unless the creative activity has still gripped his whole being. If he has cooled completely, you drop that phase until you catch him stirring again. The point is one of labor-saving simply. Once caught in the excitement of creative writing he can be cured of the whole business in the sixth part of a jiffy.

Do not miss the point, however. To cast out the fear of inadequacy by poking fun at the mechanistic side of writing by thus belittling it seriously, for your tone must show that personally you don't give a thrippenny darn for all the commas in pie-dom (and you don't), that is almost to put the Demon of Inhibition completely out of business. The insistence upon "Scribble!" does the rest for him. Aaron at the rock is nothing to the flow that this simple psychiatric trick will do for fluency among the seemingly dumb.

(Now for a pack of indignant letters from perfectly respectable ladies and gentlemen which will announce that I have taken the last prop from a tottering civilization! Well, it *was* a good little civilization while it lasted.)

III

Having gone thus far in exposing myself as a person of low standards—for the purposes of salvation I have often dropped to the level of publicans and sinners—I may as well confess further: deliberately I plant in likely souls a faith in the possibilities of creative ability even when they give no outward evidence of having any. Many may conceive this procedure to be immoral; that it works, miraculously almost, is my simple utilitarian defence.

In effect I tell them, not all of it, of course, at any one time: "You have something to say. Perhaps you don't believe that. But, nevertheless, you do have something to say. Everybody has. It may be so deep inside of you that it is below consciousness. Waiting to be brought up. Perhaps you have had glimpses of it at times but have thought it worthless. On the contrary, it is one of your most valuable possessions. The world always pays a high price for it, because it is rare; so few persons are able to discover it within themselves, or, having discovered it, so few are able, or have the courage, to bring it boldly forth.

"Perhaps you have thought it just silliness, those thoughts and imaginings that roam about deep inside of you. It is not silliness. On the contrary, it may be the very height of sense. Perhaps you have been ashamed of it. On the contrary, it may be something to be proud of.

"You have something to say. Something of your very own. Try to say it. Don't be ashamed of any real thought or feeling you have. Don't undervalue it. Don't let the fear of what others may think of it prevent you from saying it. Perhaps not aloud, but to yourself. You have something to say, something that no one else in the world has ever said in just your way of saying it.

"When people talk around you, don't you often have your own private views? Too terrible sometimes even to think? That may be the something you have to say, or a part of it. Haven't you imagined yourself in all sorts of absurd situations? That may be it, or a part of it.

"The thing you have to say is bigger than you. No matter how much you bring forth, there is always more. It can continue to emerge all your life, and just as much will remain unsaid. Only a part comes out at a time. But you must get that part out of you. It will not be the best part, but it must come first. Once get it started and more and more will follow. And it will be better and better; or, more like it, better and worse, then better and worse and better. It has terrible ups and downs, but the long trend is always up.

"You have something to say, something important, but the thing itself is not half so important to you as what the saying will be to you. If you can teach yourself to find that unique and valuable possession inside of you and succeed in getting some of it out of you, you yourself will grow astonishingly in personal power. So search for it early. Get it started in order that you may begin to grow.

"You have something to say. Find out what it is. That is the beginning. Once really started, it will carry you through life; for you will be doing for yourself all that education can ever do for anybody, encouraging that deeper and powerful self to rise within you and take possession.

"I have a funny theory. Each day I get absolute proof of it. One always gets absolute proof when one has a funny theory. That's what makes it funny. My funny theory is that in the beginning man was given all wisdom but that it was concealed within him, that it is the humor of the high gods to watch man going to and fro over the earth seeking diligently for that which he carries with him in all his seekings; that also to man was given the urge to seek wisdom, and the power eventually to find it."

IV

The general method, one sees, is writing and revision many times repeated, but there is no attempt to cure every error or to straighten out every sprawling sentence. Far from that! The standards set are not at all those of a textbook; the criterion is simply that of the effect upon the interested reader. The perfection of aim of the ordinary book of rhetoric would absolutely spoil the tang and pull of the artistry before us. The beauty of imperfection! Those books know nothing of that; and their disciples know even less. It is the difference between naturally good-mannered children and children without manners who are perfect in etiquette. But the figure fails, as all attempt to make clear fails before those who have never sensed the difference between correct manners and good manners, between correct English and good English.

Once, as a boy in England, I saw a scullery maid poring solemnly over a book whose label was, "Ten Thousand Aspirates Properly Pronounced, for Maids, Butlers and Higher Servants of Her Majesty's Possessions Who Desire to Associate on Terms of Intimacy with Persons of the Better Sort." Ten thousand of them! There are that many imperfections of English in the books. What price industry? Mainly the loss of creative ability.

Our instruction has not always been apparent as such, therefore. As fellow writing persons we have met to discuss values and effects in our chosen art. We are often tolerant, therefore, where teachers have been notoriously severe, for, as writers, we know something of the stages through which a story, essay, or poem must usually pass before it reaches a presentable form. There is first the idea, which at the start may not be at all clear; then the attempts to put it on paper, crude and bungling, often illegible; then, likely as not, the complete emergence of the end before the beginning, or of the middle without either beginning or end; then the cutting down or the enlarging of parts to fit proportionately a whole that may not even have been conceived at the start.

Teachers, unless they write themselves, are often unaware of this side of creative writing; therefore they are likely to demand finished products at the first draft, or they may divert all the energies of the artist toward those excellent matters, script, spelling, punctuation, margins, clean paper, and the like. Or they may have too clear an idea, learned solely from textbooks, as to how imaginative writing should be done, producing patterns that all must follow. Perhaps it is for these reasons that successful writers speak so seldom of their courses in English!

Instruction, we think, must not quarrel with the supporting scaffolding, mistaking it for an obstruction; nor must it have a fixed and single notion how such structure should be raised. I trust that in no place in this book, written with sympathetic understanding of the enormous difficulties that beset the path of the teacher, have I intimated that there is only one way of salvation; and I should feel that it had failed if, in my excited optimism, I should have given anywhere the impression that my own way is perfect or infallible or at any point incontestable.

V

To turn now, in conclusion, from the narrower discussion of classroom technique to the larger considerations of this book, the problem of releasing the powerful and valuable energies of youth, for the purposes, under guidance, of self-education, one must be willing to admit that freedom as well as repression has its dangers. Rugg and Shumaker in *The Child-Centered School* (World Book Company) make a searching criticism of the progressive schools based upon a sympathetic understanding of their aims and of their necessary shortcomings. The story is not complete unless one comprehends this criticism. We parents and teachers who side with the larger freedom do not often voice it aloud, for the enemy of young life is still powerful, and we are not in the fight to strengthen *him;* but to one another we willingly pay tribute to our opponent. In his long experience he has perfected much that we may not discard without peril; the difference is that, while we may use his things, we refuse ever to follow him in worshipping them.

Further, this book surveys child life from a special and limited viewpoint; it makes no attempt to tell the whole story of education, nor to deny that there are other and equally valuable viewpoints. It aims simply to add new knowledge to what we have already so laboriously gathered in our long experience with the fascinating mystery of spiritual growth.

My greatest fear has always been that I might stir up a power in youth that would defeat him in the only life he is able to live. During those five years of experimentation I have carried that with me everywhere as a troubling responsibility. The president of an orphan school once told me that the fear of fire tortured him every night of his life and kept him in tension even in sleep. I know that feeling.

Most of all I feared that those youths would be accused of presumption, which is the name the adult often employs to designate the use of judgment in the young. We knew, therefore, that we must teach them some of the rigorous and unchanging customs of the world: that one must defer and keep silent in the presence of most elders; that one must learn diplomacy in expressing views of any sort that differ from the prevailing run; that college sophomores resent even the possession of common sense by freshmen. Further, they must know that their best work will be derided and be dubbed inferior or frankly bad; that the slightest headiness on their part will bring unforgettable punishment; that they must fall back rather than push forward; that they must wait for invitations and take their losses cheerfully if none come; that while time will be on their side, yet the long ordeal of patient waiting cannot be abridged. It must be drilled into them that the greatest danger of strong youth is a vain sacrifice in needless martyrdom: it is almost always folly to begin a lone fight with authority or with social groups or with any established organization. Finally, they should be convinced that while it is possible for youth to be wiser at times than its elder overlords, that that youth is not wise who announces the fact or even hints that such might ever be.

This is nothing more or less, in short, than the possession of decent public manners, but it was the hardest lesson our boys and girls had to learn in the few months before graduation. We did not shirk our part, however, and if we erred at all it was on the side of teaching them to conceal their native powers, a contradiction to all our previous practice.

Those early eighth graders have now graduated from college; those that followed during the five years are scattered among the major institutions, technical and collegiate, of the country; or they have found their place in the world's affairs. For me that tension is over. They went from us equipped with taste and judgment, qualities that can never be put on from the outside but are always a growth from within. I am content to believe that there is no better preparation for life or living.

PART TWO

TYPES OF HIGH-SCHOOL PROSE

Selected from Lincoln Lore
(1920–1925), a magazine of
literature issued by the pupils of
the Lincoln School of Teachers
College, Columbia University,
New York City

THE FAIR ONE

To BEGIN with, it was Rally Night, and you know what that means—everyone in class colors; loads of songs, some peppy and some touching and sad, just to remind the Seniors that soon (sob) they'll be leaving their "dear Alma Mater" and all that; Glee Club on the Chapel steps; and the wind-up with the snake dance around the Circle. Everyone was in such a fervor of excitement that it was hardly a snake dance; really a mad rush. The lanterns strung up all over the grounds—it didn't rain!—put the finishing touch to a gay, mad, don't-know-what's-the-matter-with-you night.

When the main part of the celebration was over, we came back to the dorms, still bubbling and wide-awake, and then the great idea occurred that ice cream would top the occasion. It didn't take long to plan a course of action. Luck was with us; just as we got upstairs two Pembroke Academy boys walked by. We hailed them, and a scurry ensued to collect, but somehow, financially embarrassed as we all were at the end of the term, two dollars were found and forwarded and all was set. In no time the clan had fished out the shoe horns, the time-honored substitutes at Carter House for eating implements.

After what seemed a geological period the boys came back and we were Johnny-on-the-spot with a long string and a knitting bag. All went smoothly—our accomplices were directly under, the ice cream was in the bag, and absolutely no one in sight—when out from a dark window below reached a hand which pulled in the whole works!

Needless to say we dropped the string in a hurry, and sat staring at—nothing!

In a few minutes a paper loaded with a stone came crashing through the open window; it carried two dollars and a laconic message, "Hard Luck!" The boys were good sports, anyway, and took the responsibility for not delivering the goods in safety.

The question was, whose hand was it? It couldn't have been the housekeeper's; she went to bed with the chickens; besides, she slept on the opposite side of the house. The only other person living downstairs was the nurse, but she was always a brick about helping us have a good time. It dawned on someone that it might be Lee Carroll. She hadn't been in the crowd, and she was full of those tricks. Elly went scouting for her, but, alas it wasn't she; Rally Night had been too much for her and she was laid out in bed.

II

Then, in the midst of the gabble, came a familiar tap on the door, beginning with the fifth finger nail and continuing successively down the other four; this three times, and silence. Miss Meachim!

It was long after "lights out." A scramble followed, Peg under the bed, Midge and I in the closet. Elly and Jig, who belonged there, sat calmly on the bed and called sleepily "Come in!"

Without a second invitation Miss Meachim was in the room, bearing a very calm and knowing countenance.

"Do you mind if I come in and sit a little while?" she had the nerve to ask. "I think there are some boys prowling around outside. They are getting so bold," she added.

So she sat down by the window and waited. No one said a word.

Carter House was a very old dorm, with squeaky boards and very small closets, hardly large enough to put one's clothes in, not to mention two fairly large-sized girls; and with the doors closed—yes, it was cramped. Also it was H-O-T, hot! And every time we took a breath, silk rustled, roaring to us like a wind storm; and when we tried to get more comfortable, it sounded like the charge of the Light

Brigade—there were so many shoes and things on the floor. Elly told us afterwards that she nearly laughed outright. But Miss Meachim sat tight. She always prided herself on being a "fair one" and wouldn't lower herself to snoop or pussy-foot around.

Elly and Jig were getting tired of her company and were beginning to feel for us unfortunates, but Miss Meachim gave no signs of leaving, so the girls started giving her the "once over," just to make her feel more at home, and when Jig noticed a splotch and a brown trickle down the front of the visitor's perfect skirt, she nudged Elly and looked closer. A trade mark like that could be made by nothing in this world but chocolate ice cream!

III

Seized with a sudden idea, Jig began right off with, "The boys have gone, I guess, Miss Meachim. I haven't seen any around, *have you?*"

"Well," sweetly, "I want to be quite sure that they won't bother you any more tonight." And she stuck.

"Say, Miss Meachim," Jig continued with unusual assurance, "you always were a good sport; let us go around the corner and get some ice cream to eat while we sit here."

The inmates of the closet were all ears; Peg, under the bed, kicked nervously into the wall. What was Jig driving at?

"Really, you know," came the expected reply, "that is out of the question—against the rules."

"But, Miss Meachim," Jig went on, "why not forget a few rules on Rally Night? It only comes once a year." Then, looking her squarely in the face, "Wouldn't you honestly enjoy some ice cream yourself?"

"No," still sweetly, "I don't think I care for any just now. It is bad for the complexion at night. You girls are so careless about the things you eat. But I couldn't let you go anyway." Further argument brought, "It is too late; and ice cream on top of so much excitement would surely make you ill." Miss Meachim was intent on settling the question.

"Oh, well," Jig remarked sarcastically, "I guess we'll have to call it off for tonight. Majority certainly does not rule around here." She eyed Miss Meachim's skirt and prepared to play the last card.

"Miss Meachim!" Jig cried with a well-acted gasp and a dramatic pause, "You have spilled something on your new skirt! Just *ruined* it, I do believe! *Look* at it! It was *so* good looking, too; and white serge is *so* hard to clean. Isn't it a *shame!*" And she continued making exclamations while Miss Meachim studied the tracery on her skirt. All that she could say was, "I wonder what it could be?"

One look at the two girls, now openly defiant, was enough, evidently, for she excused herself, making some feeble remark about removing the stain, and got out.

IV

The door closed. The girls limped from their respective hiding places and all entered in on an indignant indignation meeting.

"The fair one!"

"The pig!"

"She ate our ice cream and then tried to get away with it smoothly."

"Just like her!"

"'I wonder what it could be?'"

"Meow! Meow!"

We fumed at great length and had about concluded to go brazenly out and get the ice cream for ourselves and let the future take care of itself—we had stood enough for one night—when the well-known tapping was heard again on the door. No one thought of hiding this time. Things had gone too far.

"Come in!" called Jig impatiently.

Miss Meachim entered, spreading a smeary smile, and carrying a two-quart box of ice cream! And a half-dozen real spoons!

We all registered—blank!

She murmured something about the really hot night and running around to Gray's herself, ending with a "Good-night" and started to retreat.

Someone came to enough to call after her, "Thanks so much! Won't you stay and share?"

From down the hall came faintly, "No, thank you, girls. I had some early in the evening . . . It . . . didn't agree with me."

H. A., Grade XII.

ADAM

"Each tiny blade of grass was precisely as long as one's little finger. Each tiny bug that chanced to crawl on the apple tree was squashed. Hand work, too. Every bit of it."

"And who," asked Agnes, "had such patience and where was this devotion showered?"

"The patient one, who squandered his care on the Garden —it was the Garden of Eden—was no other than Adam. He spent all of his time plucking blades and killing bugs until the garden was as flourishing as your Aunt Cynthia's back yard.

"One day Adam came to the realization that the garden should have a wall. Lizards and snakes disturbed his nightly slumber."

"Lizzzards and sssnakes," hissed Agnes, shuddering.

"A wall of some kind must be built. A flimsy one would undoubtedly have served the purpose, but Adam's mind did not run to flimsiness. There would be a great wall or no wall.

"So, with this noble thought in his mind, he set about to find sufficient rocks. Adam was not content with little rocks and often he would spend a week moving some gigantic boulder from its resting place to the site. At last, after many months of toiling, the stones were hauled. Now came the greatest task, erecting the wall. Mud served the purpose of holding the rocks together and it was an awful time Adam had mixing it to the proper consistency."

"I always have an awful time making mud pies," mused Agnes.

"After choosing a mammoth boulder for the corner stone, he proceeded to cover it with oozing handfuls of mire. He depended, of course, upon the sun to dry the mud, and many were the angry words he muttered when it rained every day for a week. At last the sun came out, but it shone so hot after its absence that the clay cracked and crumbled. Can Adam be blamed if he felt discouraged? The rain and sun had made the grass fairly jump, and bugs hiked up and down the apple tree in great droves. But, despite all of this, Adam was not discouraged, for he was a most courageous man. Singing as he worked, he spent half of each day trimming the grass and squashing the bugs, and the other half building the wall."

"What did he sing?" Agnes thought to herself.

"All went well for a week. Things were being accomplished, slowly but surely. Then one evening when he sat down to wipe the perspiration from his brow, he chanced to notice, for the first time, the setting sun. The sky was stained with the most marvelous hues, and Adam thought how fine a sight it would be if he could reproduce them on his wall. Thus came the first desire to paint."

"I like to paint," said Agnes.

"He sat pondering over the practicability of his scheme when the moon drifted up like a silver bowl and poured its liquid light over the earth. Now this was the first time Adam had ever noticed the moon, for he was always sleeping soundly at moonrise and moonset. He felt enthralled, uplifted; his hand itched for something. 'Ah,' he thought, 'if I could put my feelings on the wall.' Thus came the first desire to write.

"The entire night he spent in making up a system of hieroglyphics with which he might record those new and unexpressed feelings. At dawn the sun found him scratching queer experimental forms in the dirt.

"With reluctance he turned back to drudgery. All the day he felt discontented with his work. It seemed twice as hard as ever before. And when night came Adam had accomplished very little. The desire to paint and write gnawed his soul. He could not sleep."

"Silly dreamer!" said Agnes.

"No, he did not dream. Instead he invented a cement mixer, a tree sprayer, and a lawn-mower. The next day he was delighted to see how well they worked, accomplishing more in three hours than his hands could have done in four weeks. And that's how he found time to paint and write."

"Well, it's a good thing he thought up those things," concluded Agnes, "for he'd o' been working forever in that mud."

T. P., Grade X.

NIGGER

A CHARACTER IN A SOUTHWEST CORRAL

Nobody knows where Nigger came from. He seems to have been on the ranch from time immemorial. All that is known is that he was a desert pony, and that he must have been young some time. His present age is about sixteen, a very old horse for the West.

Nigger is, of course, black; if he were ever brushed he might have a nice coat, but as it is he is mouse-colored because of the dust on him. He has a short neck and his face is black except for a white blaze from his forehead to his nose. Napoleon was short; Cæsar was short; so you would expect Nigger to be short; and he is; short, strong and, above all, wise.

He is so wise that his wisdom has become a myth on the ranch. Everyone delights in telling stories of his sagacity. These anecdotes were fully borne out by my own personal experience with him.

Nigger's sagacity took the form of self-preservation. He hated work above anything and, whenever he could, he got out of it. He was not, however, fool enough to make himself a lot of trouble to avoid a little work. When he saw that he had to work, he did; but often he used his head to save his heels. He could always tell the easiest way up any hill or around any obstacle and would take it no matter whether the other horses did or not, which is peculiar, for they usually follow each other blindly. He would never go too close to a fence or tree and so hit his pack and give himself a jar.

II

On a pack-trip the pack-horses were never led after they got far enough from home, far enough so that they had no thought of leaving the saddle-horses and trying to get back. When Nigger was let loose he used to fall way behind everyone and stay just far enough to be out of sight around the bushes. When I was new to him this used to worry me a lot, especially if my bed was on him, and I would watch anxiously through the olive green and gray of the desert shrubs for the white canvas of his back bobbing up and down, or stop and wait for him to come up; but I soon got over this. I think he hung back hoping to slow up the rest of the train and to show his independence. If he was lightly packed he used to run away off the track and perhaps go on the opposite side of a small hill, probably smelling some succulent plant on that side. The pack-horses eat as they go along, biting at the plants in passing.

Twice a year the horses make a trip of about 150 miles to Flagstaff, the summer outpost of the ranch. This trip is so long that no grain can be carried and the horses have to forage for themselves. Most horses, when they are unpacked for the night and hobbled, immediately disperse and try to find some food, however scarce it is. Nigger was not such a fool. When he came in from a long trip, tired, and noticed that there was not much to eat, he would lie down and go to sleep, thereby gaining more strength than his fellows who wandered around in search of feed.

On the shorter camping trips we almost always carried grain. When we came in and got the animals unpacked we would tie them to a tree and wait for them to cool off if they were sweaty. Then we would water them. Finally we would spread their saddle-blankets in front of them. Nigger knew that this meant feeding and would set up a terrible whinnying for fear that he would be forgotten and lose his hatful of grain. Nothing would appease him but his meal spread out before him. When he had eaten all he could get from the blanket, there would still be some specks of grain left stuck fast. The average horse would forego these, but not so Nigger. He would pick the blanket up in his teeth and give it a terrific shaking. Then he would drop it to one side and with his long lips commence gleaning from the ground the particles he had salvaged. In this way he kept himself in very good condition. In fact these qualities, combined with great sure-footedness, made him the best pack-horse on the ranch.

III

It was necessary to be very firm with him, however, for he was not above malingering and using tricks to get what he wanted, as I learned to my great chagrin. Among his other accomplishments Nigger was a reliable but unutterably slow buggy horse. I once had occasion to drive him about five miles and as I was all alone in the buggy and knew the road, I was anxious to get over it as fast as possible, so I started Nigger off at what I thought was a good pace. I judged from his laboring and the way I had to stir him up with the whip that he was doing his best. I certainly had to keep the whip going, for every time I would forget my vigilance Nigger would imperceptibly slow up to a walk. Once I let the poor animal walk for a quarter of a mile, he seemed so tired. In fact, he could hardly raise his feet from the ground. When after hours and hours I finally got him in I was suffering terrible pangs of remorse for having driven him so hard. It occurred to me while I was unharnessing him that he would be wringing wet with sweat, so I passed my hand over his chest and between his forelegs. He was as dry as a bone; another innocent had been added to the list of his victims.

One week-end two fellows took him out on a pack-trip. They were both unaccustomed to horses. When they got him into the desert he showed great signs of distress and went lame. Of course they unpacked him, put the pack on one of the riding-horses, and saddled Nigger. I am sure that you could not find anywhere an instance of a quicker cure from lameness than the cure effected on Nigger by this shifting of burdens. Of course it was noticed but it was too late to change back. On reaching the camping place for the night he was evidently worn out, although he had been in the feed corral all week doing nothing. As the next day's ride was a hard one the campers, after mature deliberation, decided to pack the saddle-horse again. Nigger had added two more to his list of victims.

Two other fellows and myself decided a week or two later to take Nigger on a camping-trip but didn't expect to be put upon by him as one of us had been to Flagstaff and knew him well. Having heard that Nigger was in an artful mood, Jimmie took a quirt along. He said that this was a great panacea for all Nigger's ills. Nigger hung back until he learned that there was a quirt in the party. After that nothing could have been more lamb-like.

At evening we had to cross a wide, shallow river, on the other side of which we were to camp, so Jimmie told me that it was a trick of Nigger's to cool himself off by rolling in the water, pack and all. He was to lead Nigger across and I was to follow immediately behind to prod Nigger if he showed any signs of stopping or pawing around for a soft place. We stopped to let the horses drink before we crossed. Jimmie's mare got through first and he rode her out into the stream ready to lead Nigger who was still drinking. Forgetting him for a minute we were all examining the other shore or watching the water eddy around our horses' feet. Suddenly Nigger, without pawing the earth or giving any of the usual signs, began to sink down. Luckily Jimmie happened to look back before Nigger was in the water. He instantly dug his heels into his mare, who being high spirited, leaped forward pulling Nigger along. We were saved by a hair.

The next night I had just got to sleep when I was awakened by Jimmie getting out of bed and putting on his hat. Nigger had got loose and Jimmie was pursuing him. After chasing him for quite a while Jimmie finally caught Nigger and brought him back. We thought, of course, he had broken his rope. He hadn't; he had untied it! I had myself tied that rope in a very secure knot just before, and Jimmie had inspected it: but how Nigger got it undone I cannot guess.

IV

Nigger's greatest coup, however, was executed on a trip to Flagstaff. As I said before, when no feed is brought for them the horses are hobbled in the evening, so they can hunt for food. In the morning they are "wrangled in." On the Flagstaff trips it is important to get started pretty early, about six o'clock. One day Nigger and a mare called Molly could not be found. Everyone searched high and low; it was long past starting time and the horses were all packed, but no signs of Nigger or Molly. Finally at ten o'clock one of the fellows stumbled on both of them hidden in a bush right next to camp. I suppose Nigger had prevailed on Molly to try for a half holiday. They must have stood absolutely still for four hours at least, for if they had moved they would certainly have been heard.

I imagine there is nobody who has known Nigger but has at one time or another been his victim, except perhaps in his remote and inexperienced colthood; and they would all agree, I think, that for sagacity, persistence, and trickiness, Solomon, Odysseus, and B'rer Rabbit rolled into one would not be his equal.

W. F., Grade XII.

WHEN THE FISH DON'T BITE

My brother and I were standing on the fishing pier and looking down at the yellow-green water of the Atlantic. Although not a fisherman myself, I often accompany my brother, who likes the sport very much, to watch him try his luck. That day the fish, for some reason, wouldn't bite, though you could see pilot fish and lafayettes swim around in schools of several hundred. There was quite a bit of excitement a little earlier in the afternoon when a great shoal of blue fish went past, making the water look silver as they jumped at the menhaden. Some of the fishermen cast right through the school with metal squids, but none would bite.

As the fishing wasn't any good, we decided to start home, when we heard shouting and screaming from the beach. Looking back toward the shore we could see all of the bathers rushing out of the water upon the sand, and the cry of "Sharks!" came plainly to our ears. No one had ever heard of sharks coming so far north, but the summer had been very warm and we had caught rumors of sharks being seen along the coast, though practically no one believed it possible.

My brother laid down his pole, and together we ran along the pier to the beach. All the people were out on the shore and stood looking at the water where four large and shiny fins were plainly cutting through the waves. Suddenly a man yelled "Look!" and pointed out to sea where the head of a swimmer could be seen moving slowly, appearing like a small black dot on the bright water. He was about a quarter of a mile out, probably one of those young fellows who enjoy swimming long distances.

Everyone gazed at the swimmer for a second, then immediately a rush was made for the life boat. It was up on the beach quite far from the water. Quickly it was dragged to the water's edge. The guard called four young fellows, who jumped into the boat and took up the oars. With a helping shove from those on shore, the boat shot out over the breakers, old Jake, the guard, keeping it steady by the tiller held firmly in his right hand.

A shout arose from the crowd on the beach; the sharks had turned and were heading straight out to sea toward the swimmer.

The men pulled on their oars with all their strength, encouraged by old Jake; he had picked up an oar and was sculling with all his might. The crowd cheered and yelled to the rowers to redouble their efforts, but though the boat shot through the water at a fine rate, the sharks kept gaining, their gray fins making a broad arrow-head as they sliced the water.

The boat was about one hundred and fifty yards from the swimmer; he seemed totally unaware of his danger, though the shark fins were all around him. Jake called to him, telling him to swim to the boat. Putting a great effort into the next few strokes the men shot the craft forward and had nearly reached the man; he was about ten yards away. Then they saw, when he lifted up his face, that he was a Negro.

Old Jake gave a shout, "Look!" The rowers turned around and saw a long gray form flash past the bow of the boat. There was a splash and both the man and the shark disappeared under the green waves. Instantly the water around the place became red, a red of varying shades, from maroon to the lightest pink.

Jake, standing up at the stern, swore at everything, wishing he had brought a gun along. "With a gun I could 'a' got that fellow!" he muttered again and again. In the excitement of getting off no one had thought of a firearm.

Suddenly the boat gave a lurch to one side, the rowers grabbed up their oars—one of the sharks seemed to be rising right next to them—when they saw a brown hand gripping the gunwale of the boat, and in a second the Negro had swung himself over.

He was not at all disturbed. His bright eyes gleamed pleasantly as if he had just been through a merry adventure.

He smiled as he saw the oars ready to strike, and said, "Yo' thought I was a shahk?"

In one hand he carried a long black-handled knife. As he seated himself in the bow he slipped the dirk into a sheath hung from his canvas belt.

The boat crew could say nothing for a few seconds, but Jake soon found his tongue and asked, "How did you get away? We were all sure they had you."

"Oh," replied the Negro carelessly, "I do come from Hawaii." He showed all his teeth in a lazy smile. "Shahk, he do' know I do come from Hawaii!"

S. J., Grade X.

THE STRIKER

We had not been married long enough to know anything, when the war sent George off to the training camp, but before he sailed we had two famous, if hectic, months together in one of those huge Army camps. For most of the time I was cook, chief mate, deck swabber and kitchen police. Then we had a maid.

The maid was not a lady, and he wasn't quite a gentleman. The Army calls him a "striker," which means a soldier who is willing to do your housework in his off hours for a small extra payment. The advertisement for such office should read, "Not necessary to know anything about the duties of the position."

The C. O., meaning the Commanding Officer, and his wife were coming to dinner; and those who have ever been on an Army post know that as a rule everything goes wrong on that momentous occasion, probably for the reason that this is the time when you most desire that everything should go right. The Mrs. C. O. is the only person on the post with absolute liberty of speech; so when the mayonnaise curdles or the roast burns, she is quite likely to inform the post at large of the fact. This is her recognized right as wife of the Commanding Officer and she would be regarded as peculiar if she did not fulfil expectations.

George was drilling "rookies," so he would not be off duty until late in the evening, but he had promised to get me a striker to help with the dinner. The telephone rang. It was George's orderly saying that the striker would be over immediately "under guard." Before I could say anything he had hung up.

II

"Under guard!" A prisoner? As I was reflecting whether he would make away with us by poisoning the soup or by turning on the gas in the bedrooms, a bang on the door informed me of his approach.

Almost immediately the door flew open and the striker entered. Heels click; snappy salute; then he steps briskly forward and stands at attention. During the ceremony he does not remove his garrison cap, the strap of which is hooked down under his nose in a fiercely military way.

I asked him if he could wash dishes. "Would rather wash dishes, sir, than eat." ("Sir," to me!)

"Dust?"

He pulled out a pocket handkerchief and began to dust the wall.

"Wait!" I called. "Can you cook?"

"Used to cook for Vincent Astor," he answered. "Where's the kitchen?" He brushed right by me and started up the stairs.

"Stop!" I cried. "We don't cook in the bedrooms."

"Must say, 'Halt,'" he answered.

"Halt!" said I obediently.

He stopped like a clock. "Come on down," I pleaded. "The kitchen's in the back. If you are so crazy over cooking, come on down and prove it."

He turned his head around like a giraffe. "Sir," he said, "can't move without military order."

There stood the creature rigid, halfway up the stairs, shoulders up, chin out, staring ahead. He must be a murderer, I thought; but I also thought of my dinner. "What in heaven's name shall I do?" I gasped.

"Say, 'About face,'" said he. I said it. He wheeled around. "Say, 'Forward march.'" I said it. Down he came muttering, "*One*, two, three, four! Hep! Hep!"; straight ahead for the front door.

A full-sized man going in high with the muffler open steering for the front door is a dangerous thing for a frame house. But he stood there against the wall marking time, and hep-heping; so I tried "About face!" and "Forward march!" It worked. He turned around and marched straight up the stairs again!

"Halt!" I almost shrieked. "For goodness sake, what am I going to do with you if you insist on going up and down the steps like a mechanical doll?"

I could get nothing from him but that he could not move except under military orders, so I left him on the stairs, at attention, eyes front.

III

The phone failed to locate George, but remembering that the real man on an Army post is the adjutant I called him up. He was an old-timer, a "regular," so he was not astonished at the series of questions I launched at him. From him I learned how to make a soldier go forward, backward, right, left, and stop. He even waited while I jotted it down.

To the mechanical doll I tried the following military orders, "About face! Forward march! Column left! March! Column right! March! Column left! March! Halt! Left face!" and had him standing before the kitchen stove.

"Cook!" I commanded. He didn't move. How do you make a machine cook when to all intents and purposes it doesn't know what the word means? Answer, call the adjutant. But the adjutant was at a staff meeting. If you really want anybody in the Army he is at a staff meeting.

Just then I heard George's voice in the kitchen. I rushed out. "How long has this man been at attention?" he asked.

"About twenty minutes," I answered.

"Good heavens!" he cried. "Have you no mercy in you, woman?" To the rigid soldier he turned and bawled, "At ease!" followed immediately with, "Rest!"

The creature relaxed like a collapsing umbrella and gasped, looking at me, "Phew! Some drill sergeant!"

George then gave the fellow some mystic signs known only to the fraternity; he began to cook. Cook? It was wonderful what that boy could do with raw food! But he courteously but firmly refused to move from the stove. Every blessed thing had to be handed to him. And he kept up a stream of talk that could be heard in the next barracks. We didn't listen much until he said, "Talking of food, they're trying to poison me in the ward."

"Ward?" George grew suddenly attentive, and asked, "You mean the hospital ward?"

"Yes," he replied, "ward 19."

George jumped up, rushed out and grabbed his hat from the hall table. I followed. "That's the crazy ward!" he cried; "I'm beating it to the guard house to have this bird pulled off." And he left before I could stop him.

IV

Just outside my window a company was forming to march to retreat. Through the open door came the clear commands "Fall in! Attention!" Instantly came a crash from the kitchen and the sound of heels clicking together. From outside, the command, "Count fours!"; from the kitchen a monotonous count of "*One*, two, three four!" repeated over and over. Outside, "Right by squads; forward march!"; from the kitchen, our striker bearing a tray of my best glassware with the evening's dessert, a fluffy whipped meringue, was staring solemnly ahead and saying, "Hep! Hep!"

I frantically pulled the wicker table out of his way. He was aiming for the farther wall. "Column left!" I wailed.

"Column left!" That was all I could think of! "Column left!" He wheeled about in a circle crying, "Hep! Hep! *One*, two, three, four!" the tray held firmly in front like a port arms. I tried to get the tray from him but he held on like iron.

In the excitement he got headed so far toward the side door that to say, "Column left!", which seemed to be the only military vocabulary I had left, would smash him into my tea table.

So I said nothing, and he stalked solemnly out of the door and joined the tail end of the marching company, "Hep! Hep!" and I never saw the meringue, the glassware, or the striker again.

P. M., Grade XI.

WHEN THE SHIP GOES WOP WITH A WIGGLE BETWEEN

When the cabin port-holes are dark and green
Because of the seas outside;
When the ship goes wop (*with a wiggle between*)
And the steward falls into the soup-tureen,
And the trunks begin to slide;
When Nursey lies on the floor in a heap,
And Mummy tells you to let her sleep,
And you aren't waked or washed or dressed,
Why, then you will know (*if you haven't guessed*)
You're "Fifty North and Forty West."

CURLERS were all on and the cold cream was about to be spread, to say nothing of men running up and down the long narrow corridors, shaving brushes in hand, while others in the staterooms rang frantically for hot water. In short, everyone was in a terrible hustle getting ready for the greatest event of the voyage, namely, the Captain's dinner. The chef in the kitchen was in the deepest depths of despair and anger, calling some poor garçon "camel" and various other perfectly outrageous names, and the next minute fairly in ecstasies over the butter pat he was designing.

Everyone was feeling fine. The trip had been a wonderful success, congenial passengers with no more than the usual quota of steamer bores, good food and, best of all, balmy days and calmest of seas. Tomorrow we would all wave good bye to the dear boat that had completely won our hearts—strange, isn't it, how one can become so devoted to a mere boat!—and start out on the great adventure of abroad-for-the-first-time.

Slowly the minutes ticked by and the commotion continued till at last, Clangg! Clangg! Clang! the dinner gong resounded through the halls and decks. A last swoop of the brush, a final dab of powder, and every cabin poured into the aisles visions of so-called beauty.

My, but I was thrilled! As the crush neared the dining room doors I gasped at the mountainous display of glassware, silverware, silk electric light shades, streamers and what-nots of decoration; near by resided elegant pyramids of vegetable jellies and beautiful birds, garnished and decorated with all the skill of French culinary art; and—wonderful!—right inside the dining room a complete boiled salmon stared at me with a large, rather sad, white eye.

So this was a Captain's dinner, famous institution of the sea! From all that I could see so far, it lived up to the good reputation it had gained. I sat down at the table thoroughly awed with the miraculous display of silver and glass set forth before my wondering eyes.

II

Ah, here comes Charles with the soup! Delicious indeed it is! I sip it, first rapidly, then slowly, then stop. . . . There is something about the way it rises and falls in little waves that makes me decide to leave the rest alone. I am possessed with an idea that if I eat any more of it I, too, will be rising and falling in waves. Too bad! That first spoonful certainly had tasted good.

Maybe it's only imagination, I think, and take my spoon in hand to try again. No, I guess I'd better not.

I wonder what makes it act like that, anyway. Everything else in the room seems to be normal, that is, almost normal, though there does seem a rather ominous, I-can't-say-what in the air. I have a strange premonition that something is going to happen soon, and that I'm going to wish it hadn't happened.

Thank heavens, Charles has removed that slishy, sloshy soup. Now for some stable fish. . . . As he holds it out for me, I take the knife and make a clean cut, when—Oh, horrors! Why is that fish looking at me like that? It is most certainly smiling! Maybe I hit its funny bone.

I make another stab. Merciful heavens! It starts to laugh at me and, yes, that big white eye, still sad though the rest of the head is in spasms of mirth, winks at me, as if to say,

"No need to worry; you won't eat any of me, my dear."

"Nonsense! Utter foolishness! Perfect imbecility!" I mutter, and politely say, "*Non, merci,*"—It is a French ship—and Charles passes on with the complete salmon. It is still complete.

I am fascinated as my neighbors dive into it, slash, and seem to grab portions for their own. How can the family eat it with such audible gusto! . . . Was I the only one to whom it had given that ghastly wink? . . . Slowly, how slowly they eat that horrible dish! . . . Will they never get through?

I am terribly bored and depressed. What did we ever start out to go to Europe for, anyway? Why did we pick out this horrid French boat? I suddenly develop a terrible antipathy against all things French.

I knew there was something queer about that champagne glass before me the minute I sat down. Surely I must be mistaken, but, no, it is fox-trotting sedately about with the tall salt-cellar!

Then from over the waters comes plainly the word

"Heave!" I know it is the dumping of ashes from a porthole, but it seems to rise out of the sea and cry, "Heave!" A rattle of chains, pause, then the horrid word, "Heave! . . . Heave!"

III

Dear me, how strangely Charles is acting. He is coming at me with sudden, quick darts, and in his hands he is carrying a large platter with a pyramid of carrots—horrid things—and peas. As he comes nearer, the tower of vegetable jelly leans, then breaks, and from its midst jumps, in a peculiar wavy fashion, the bird I had seen on the table by the door. It makes straight for me.

I clutch at my throat; I feel strangled. Shutting my eyes I let out a low moan—I don't seem to be able to scream—and make a wild dash for somewhere else, I don't care where, as long as it is away from here. . . .

Slowly I begin to breathe again and I open my eyes cautiously, for I am half afraid of what I shall see. But I behold only darkness. Great Scott! did that bird eat me?

No; the darkness is familiar and I feel a cool breeze. I move my head—my, but it aches!—and as someone passes I realize that I am huddled in my deck chair.

I hear a voice near by say, "That squall certainly came up suddenly," and I seem to understand.

E. C., Grade XII.

THE COOK WHO COULD

Jolly old Mr. Sun, looking down one Sunday morning on a heretofore uninhabited island, was amazed to see the white fly of a fair-sized tent flapping in the breeze, and camping utensils scattered over the ground. As he reached a clearing in the fairly dense mass of birch, cedar, and rock oak, his attention was attracted to four—no, five—boys energetically moving about. And as he peered more intently his gaze was returned by a youngster of fourteen peevishly wiping his brow.

Perhaps if Mr. Sun had realized that the young dweller on earth was excessively warm and, furthermore, was destined to be the hero of this two-weeks' camping trip, the idea might have penetrated his head that he was not welcomed quite so near. But evidently no such thought crossed his mind, for he continued to beam warm smiles on all five boys as he watched them vainly try to start a fire with water-soaked twigs still dripping from the previous night's rain. It was our hero who at last saved the day by presenting the "chief cook" with a dry newspaper.

It came time to cook the eggs. The "chef" calmly decided this sunny morning that fried eggs would best suit the appetites of his noble but ravenous comrades. Accordingly he selected five "breakfast eggs"—as this was breakfast—and with a force that would have done credit to an athlete, brought them in contact with a large flat rock. As he expected, the eggs broke; but, alack, not quite as he had anticipated. Instead of two equal pieces, there were two dozen equal pieces.

Nevertheless, a good cook never wastes anything; so he quietly scooped the entire substance into the pan and informed the crew, "Scrambled eggs this morning, buddies!" When the party discovered that the scrambled eggs was a hash of bits of rock, egg shell, sand, ashes, and egg proper, they were ready to cook the cook; and as soon as the object of their threats became conscious of the feeling toward him the office was quickly vacated.

II

These five representatives of the species commonly known as "scouts" ranged from twelve to fifteen years. Probably they had all at some time been presented with Christian names, but among themselves they were known as follows: "the King," because he was the smallest and the youngest and needed something to make him equal in importance to the other four; "Fishface," because of his sea-going mouth; "Carrots," a really striking resemblance; "Blay-oo," in imitation of his mother's call of "Blair"; and finally the future hero, known simply as "Bill."

The campers had voluntarily risen early that Sunday morning, which may be explained by the fact that their beds consisted of hemlock and balsam boughs over which were spread grass and a blanket. The scout manual distinctly states—page 243—that you will be surprised how soft, springy, and fragrant this sort of bed is. Fishface agreed that you certainly are surprised. Carrots owned to their fragrance but insisted that there must be some misprint about the softness; while Blay-oo remarked that perhaps the springiness referred solely to that furnished by the occupants in their haste to leave them.

As dinner time approached, the boys matched pennies for the new cook. With a shout of pleasure from the other four, Fishface won the office. "Always did have bad luck," he grumbled, adding that he didn't believe in matching pennies on Sunday anyway.

While the new cook was bemoaning his fate and inquiring if "a hoe was a necessary requisite for the making of a hoe cake", a row boat hove in sight; and as it drew nearer, the boys recognized the parents of Blay-oo. His mother was carefully balancing on her knees a large round bundle, which turned out to be a homemade chocolate layer cake of huge dimensions dripping with icing. Much to the boys' relief the guests went right off, declining the invitation to dinner, and returned home blissfully, believing that all was well on the island.

As soon as the visitors had departed, the pack rushed the cook with determined cries of "Let's eat!" but Fishface called a strike and refused to carry out the duties of his office. However, as scouts are always cheerful, they pleasantly decided to have a supper of chocolate layer cake.

The discussion turned immediately on ways and means of dividing the cake into five exactly equal parts. Blay-oo, who was in high school and knew a very great deal, declared that the only sensible solution was to inscribe a regular decagon on the top surface of the cake; join the alternate vertices; determine the center of the figure and connect the vertices of the pentagon thus formed to the center of the polygon. By cutting along these lines, he explained, as he pointed with a fork, they would find that five equal pieces remained.

With a flourish of his fork he sat down believing all difficulties at an end, but only looks of consternation met his triumphant countenance. Someone rudely remarked that geometry was all right in the classroom but that it was never meant to be used on a cake.

Another advised that each scout have a layer, but as the cake contained only three layers, the idea was abandoned. At this point "the King" with a majestic sweep of his hand commanded that the cake be cut in four pieces and that, as punishment, the cook be made to eat the "store cake" in their supplies. Carried: ayes, four; nays, one.

And as long as they were voting they made Bill the camp cook. Ayes, four; nays, one.

Early that evening Carrots remarked that there must have been something the matter with his piece of cake. About the same time Fishface, in a far-away voice, said he thought he would see if the hickory beds were any softer. The other two did not look very happy. Blay-oo insisted that he felt as if he had just swallowed four pounds of pulverized sugar. The whole camp was soon stretched on the balsam beds. Some may have slept that night; but all were startled at midnight by ghostly groans coming from the region of Carrots' blanket.

III

No one arose for breakfast nor did they evince the slightest interest in lunch, much to the relief of Bill, the newly elected cook.

The more Bill thought about his troublesome position the darker became his outlook upon life; and not even when an hour later, arrayed in his white flannels and with his tennis racquet under his arm, he slipped into the only canoe and softly paddled away from the island, had the gloom lifted from his face. Cook? Why, he doubted if he knew how to boil water. And those boys' very lives depended on him. Think of it!

As he pulled his canoe up on the small beach opposite the island, he was not surprised to see his sister and her girl chum come down to meet him, for their summer home was just beyond the clump of pines. The girls were not long in discovering that something was wrong with Bill and soon they dragged from him the cause of his worries. They didn't seem much interested, however, in the fate of five of the finest scouts that ever did a hike.

And later in the afternoon he observed that the girls were very much absorbed in a conversation of their own and appeared to be deliberately holding aloof from him. This, perhaps, rather piqued his vanity, but being a sensible chap he decided that discretion was the better part of valor and when suddenly they left him with airy and mysterious excuses, he went right off to visit a neighbor whom he never did like.

At five o'clock that afternoon, stopping at his home on his way back to camp, he was amazed to hear the girls say that they had been spending all their time making up a box for him to take with him. Amid much giggling and whispering, the contents of the box were explained and a plan hatched.

IV

When the other boys arrived at the island camp they put their fish lines out for the night and, hungry and tired, set themselves to consume the usual camp ration, cold baked beans and burned potatoes. Beside the red embers of the camp fire stood Bill, his face glowing with a contented smile.

"Dinner's served, gentlemen," he announced respectfully.

The boys glanced at him in wonder and made for the table. Four pairs of eyes became glued to the scene, for there, steaming hot, was a large bowl of lima beans and a platter of golden bantam corn on the cob, also hot; potatoes—hurrah! not baked but mashed and—and—oh!—oh!—a juicy porterhouse steak! And here were two tins of steaming hot biscuits which seemed to ask to be eaten. Oh, boy! And what was the red substance on the saucer? Why, it was crab-apple jelly! (The boys were too much amazed to inquire how Bill could make jelly over a camp fire.) Finally, to top the whole dinner, was a large golden-brown apple pie.

There were enough good things left over to do for the next day's breakfast and lunch.

Eventually the boys recovered themselves to ask Bill how he did it, but Bill only shrugged his shoulders and said "Just common sense. Anybody can get up a meal. Just use your head!"

V

Had they been less interested in their early morning swim the boys might have seen the bushes sagging along the shore, and had they been Mr. Sun, they might have seen Bill stealthily creeping toward the canoe, on his shoulder a portable fireless cooker.

But they didn't. So they never discovered the witchery of his daily meals. They point to him now with pride as that remarkable phenomenon among boy scouts, the camp cook who knows how to cook.

E. S., Grade XI.

JOHN HENRY HAS A WAY

John Henry Griswold, captain of the ferry boat, *Leonia*, smiled quietly as he stood gazing out of the window of his boarding house overlooking the silent Hudson. The day was just right; the fog, too dense to see three feet ahead, was what he had been waiting for during the whole week. All the necessary arrangements had been made; everything—methodically he reviewed them in his mind—had been done.

Carefully he made his bed, dusted his coat, and turned out the light, for the seven o'clock sun had not managed to penetrate the fog. After a last glance around he locked the door and tramped down to the ferry slip.

"A nice time for it," thought John Henry, looking at the passengers. "Just enough people on board—no babies."

As the straight figure of John Henry marched past, an ex-army member of the crew, lolling lazily on the deck, came to sharp attention.

"Uncommon much like my old major," commented the man as he watched the Captain's set face. "'It's dirty work at the crossroads to-night,'" he grinned to himself.

A "V-v-v! V-v-v!" from the whistle, full steam ahead, loud clanging of the bells, and the fat ferry grunted noisily out.

In the middle of the great river came the ring for a half-turn around; lazily the cumbersome thing swerved to the right and after a signal for full steam slipped silently down the river—headed for the Bay!

II

In a heavy fog a change in the direction cannot easily be detected and, except for the thought that it was unaccountably long in crossing, and the fear of being late to work, no one showed any signs of alarm until suddenly over the side flung a scaffold upon which the crew climbed. From nowhere in particular they produced brushes and gray paint and fell furiously to work. To interrogation from the crowd the only reply was, "Cap'n's orders."

It was at this time that an Observing Young Person noted that, contrary to all natural rules, the boat was headed down stream. To questions on this point the crew also replied shortly, "Cap'n's orders." Finally the Observing Young Person perceived that in the buttonholes of the painters reposed the small bronze pin indicating an honorable discharge from the United States Army. Realizing then that there was no hope of enlightenment from men long accustomed to obey speedily and implicitly without the slightest question the injunctions of those in command, he adjourned to the "Cap'n's" cabin.

John Henry, standing impassively at the wheel, seemed to be expecting the visitor; indeed, he told him to take a seat. The one with the cushion, he was sure, would be more comfortable.

"And you wanted to see me about the change in course, I suppose," the Captain continued. "Yes? . . . Well . . . Ambition's a funny thing; isn't it? A funny thing. It does lots o' things you wouldn't expect it to do. . . . Now me, for instance . . . all my life I've had one ambition. Fact! . . . Ever since I was a little tyke . . . wanted to be commander of a battleship . . . Now, that's natural enough in a kid, I suppose; but it never left me. . . No. . . . And I never could see the sense of going into the navy. Chances are too small of ever getting to the top. And I couldn't afford to buy a ship of my own. . . . So . . . that's all there is to it, I guess."

"But I—I don't understand you. You don't mean to say——"

"Yes—I guess I do. . . . Jes' take a look outside," finished John Henry.

III

The Observing Young Person, now thoroughly nonplussed, stepped to the door. The old boat, thanks to the zealous crew, was almost altogether changed from a dirty red to a shiny battleship gray.

"And say, young man," spoke the Captain. "Would you mind doing something for me? See those life preservers there?

Well, take them down, and you will find about a dozen packages back of them. Bring 'em out, will you?"

The young man did as he was ordered—which only shows that John Henry "had a way"—and what's more he also opened them at the older man's injunction, to discover stacks of real chicken-and-lettuce sandwiches. Nor was he surprised when he was told where to find a coffee pot and the ingredients, a small stove and matches; or when the crew, finished with their job of redecoration, came in, washed their hands and prepared to become waiters, for the sandwiches and coffee seemed to be for the passengers.

After having gone originally to demand the cause of the delay, the young man was not particularly anxious to appear before the passengers as a member of the opposing forces; but then, with the calm eye of John Henry upon him, he could not back out when asked to "Lend a hand; will you?"

IV

Quickly an idea swept through the mind of the Observing Young Man. Taking a plate of sandwiches in his hand, he slipped down the stairway. Standing in the center of one of the long aisles, he briefly explained the situation, ending with the suggestion that someone see the engineer.

But the engineer, also trained in the Army, would only say to the group of men that had immediately set off in the direction of the engine room, "When I get a toot toot from the Cap'n, I does what that toot toot says. I ain't goin' to take no chances. I like my job an' the Cap'n's the commandin' officer around here. Get me?"

Bribery was of no avail, and the men, seeing the stalwart build and scowling brow of the begrimed creature, and also noticing, perhaps, a slight movement toward a glowing iron bar that reposed in the fire, turned and left to the accompaniment of grumbled murmurs:

"Want me to git a court-martial, do they? Want to land me in the guard house, do they? Well, let's see 'em try! Jis' let 'em try!"

The men, coming back after their unsuccessful interview with the engineer, quite eagerly welcomed the sandwiches and coffee. John Henry had planned his attack well. It was the first time reinforcements for the enemy had ever assisted to a victory for the aggressors. After all, argued the people, though a little dazed with the suddenness of the happenings, it wasn't so bad if there were going to be "eats and all that." Nobody was especially anxious to go to work that particular morning; and with such a capital excuse, why worry?

But a few unconsoled ones still remained, mostly young girls who were going to meet their young men on the other side. When these joined forces and prepared to interview the Captain, they were stopped at the top of the gangway by the strains of the latest popular song coming from a large Victrola. From behind life preservers and from underneath the seats the crew had already drawn pillows, bright cushions, and pleasing rag rugs, touching the whole scene with an air of holiday.

And on a small folding table rested a ten-pound box of Page and Shaw's.

Now a five-pounder might not have done it. Some time in her life a girl has had a five-pound box of candy, but a ten-pounder. The enormity of it completely overcame the antagonism from that quarter. Anything or anybody that could bring about a miracle like that couldn't be such a "bad 'un." So when one of the young men—who was almost better looking than her Harold—gazing admiringly at Flossie's "golden crown of woman's glory," invited them to fall to—they fell. And no more thoughts of "what the boss would say" entered their pretty heads.

But when the admiring young man put "Moonlight" on the Victrola and asked Flossie to dance—his name, by the way, was Jack, which, as Flossie said, is really much nicer than Harold, anyway—her happiness was, as they say, complete.

V

As all girls are good dancers nowadays a half hour sped without thought of fog or calls of the outside world. Then the fog lifted rather suddenly and a burst of sunlight revealed on one side of the ever-widening river the shores of Hoboken and on the other a half dozen perky little destroyers at anchor.

The destroyer reminds one of a lively fox terrier, always on the alert and always anxious for a fight or a good romp. And they now lived up to their appearance, for at sight of the strange apparition of the renovated *Leonia*, hardly recognizable as such, placidly sliding down stream, they literally perked up their ears. And one particularly enterprising beast, scenting something unusual, pulled anchor and started after the "strange dog."

It was again the Observant Young Person who had viewed the approaching boat as a possible rescuer from an impossible situation. It was again he who informed the rest of the crowd of the nature of the approaching craft and its probable purpose. And it was also he who inspired a lusty, hopeful yell which awakened John Henry from pleasant reveries.

Seeing the destroyer in the distance and knowing, as he said, "the pesky nature of the inquisitive beasts," John Henry summoned the crew. Brisk orders were given. Before the astonished eyes of the commander of the torpedo boat there suddenly burst an array of small silken flags, strung from the smoke stack of the ferry boat to the top of the pilot's cabin, from the pilot's cabin to the passenger's cabin, from the railings of the upper deck to the railing of the lower; at every imaginable place, tiny, myriad-colored, multi-shaped flags, run on strong thin cord, made their appearance until the old gray boat looked like a May-day festival. This, coupled with the cheers of those on board, decided the Commander.

"Excursion boat!" disgustedly he said it. He wouldn't hear the end of it for weeks. Giving chase to an excursion boat—the absurdity of it! The disgraced terrier turned tail and went back to its fellows.

VI

The Observing Young Man, again defeated, was not to be daunted. Gathering a group about him (moral support seemed necessary for a second attack), he again sought the Captain. Another man was at the wheel; he was told they would find the Captain at the stern.

At the stern he was. Beside him stood the crew, a little to one side a man with a bugle; and, as the company approached, came the familiar sound of the "Star Spangled Banner." Immediately the crew sprang to attention; slowly an American flag ascended the flagpole; the group of advancing passengers stopped instinctively and took off their hats.

John Henry stood smiling through the ceremony; his dreams were being realized, the very last detail, even to the shining eagle at the top of the staff, to the silken tassel, to the gold fringe. A plan, formulating for years, had finally come into being.

This last *coup diplomatique* had been planned with expertness, timed to the minute. No general had ever maneuvered more brilliantly. The theory of the psychological moment had been used to the very second, for as the last notes died away, the group, though not giving out altogether, lost momentum; and, instead of demanding roughly what was the meaning of it all anyway, the question was put timidly in a more courteous manner.

VII

John Henry had already acquired that pride peculiar to owners and captains of ships. Like a mother they insist and even make themselves believe that "my ship can do no wrong." It was because of this, perhaps, that John Henry replied, casually to be sure, with no trace of any overbearing quality:

"Well, I guess she's a good old scow. Guess the *Leonia* can stand a blow; got a lot of pep in her, she has, even if I do say it myself. Like to try her on some real breakers. Believe she could do it. Fact! Got a lot of faith in the old girl."

"But you don't mean to say——" It was the Observing Young Man.

For the second time that day John Henry replied, "Yes, I guess I do . . . mean just that—never been on the real ocean, you know. Always wanted to try it. And now. . . ."

The prow lifted high and fell slowly into the trough of the first real roller.

VIII

Many things can happen in a big city; happen, excite a few headlines in the paper, and be forgotten. A few homes may be broken up—there are many homes in the world; a clerk in a department store may disappear; some deserving errand boy is made happy by a promotion; a young man's sweetheart may cease to exist—there are many other girls, more attractive, too. Even a ferry-boat may vanish, and though the loss is perhaps great enough to embarrass a transportation company, only a small fraction of the great unfeeling city is affected.

P. M., Grade XII.

THE GOLDEN CHANTICLEER

"YOU probably have noticed the gold rooster on the Heckscher Building, down on Fifth Avenue—well, he has been subjected to the most extraordinary adventures that you possibly could imagine."

"Proceed," said Agnes in an "off with his head" tone of voice.

"Before I proceed any further, I should tell you that his name is Rudolph. Extremely temperamental and egotistical; you undoubtedly could surmise as much if you ever saw him swing majestically on his pivot, surveying the town sultanically. Possibly you know that he fell or flew off his standard one day, luckily lighting on the roof below. I say 'luckily,' for imagine the consequences if he had landed on somebody's head! Like as not he would have been sent to Sing Sing."

"Horrors!" cried Agnes.

"Of course Rudolph's tumble was quite a shock—nerves, you know—and several of his feathers turned white. Obviously, something must be done, for nails and cement were totally ineffectual against his keen desire to see the world. After a lengthy consultation the Heckscher sprites decided that Rudolph be allowed to leave the tower at half-past three every morning, to return in fifteen minutes.

"If he did not appear at precisely quarter to four—C-R-A-S-H would go the Heckscher Building, tumbling onto Fifth Avenue like a gigantic avalanche!"

"Well, if he was my rooster, I would not be so severe with him." Agnes spoke in maternal tones. "I think a standing in the corner would be sufficient reprimand."

"On his first expedition, he had a most terrifying experience. As may be expected, Rudolph preferred to travel afoot, and it was when sauntering down Forty-ninth Street that he had the misfortune to fall through a manhole. Cuh-plunk! Frightfully black it was! Had he broken a leg? After standing first on one foot and then on the other, he assured himself to the contrary. Though somewhat scared—nerves, you know—Rudolph was as hale and hearty as ever."

"Thank goodness!" said Agnes with a sigh of relief.

"Suddenly, he heard a roar, broken with rhythmic clicks, and two green lights, like the eyes of a serpent, appeared in the dark. Was it a worm? Rudolph's heart throbbed tremendously at the thought. Though he had never seen such a delicacy, yet he knew, perhaps it was instinct, that such sweetmeats existed. A worm at last! Would it be a juicy one? Rudolph ran joyously toward it. But my, what a worm! As it approached, our hero was amazed at its immensity. Would it be tough? There followed a period of speculation during which Rudolph perched on one foot, leaning forward in a questioning attitude. A curious sixth sense whispered, 'That's no worm, man. That's a dragon!'

"Wheeling about he dashed away employing both legs and wings to carry him, bearing an astonishing resemblance to a marionette suspended by strings that hardly allowed him to reach the ground. He hopped and glided, ran and flew, now yanked as if by some controlling wire. From the sides gleamed sinister eyes, like the leering faces of a nightmare. And ahead! Rudolph was doomed! Another pair of ghostly eyes peered through the darkness. Neither rooster nor human ever lived through such a sensation. The universe was infested with eyes, blood-red and amber, like jewels sunken in black velvet. All were focused on him; all were intent upon his destruction.

"But why destroy a gold rooster? Those approaching emerald orbs, as if propelled by some pitying hand, swerved to one side, and the smothering darkness dissolved in light. Taking advantage of this, Rudolph made a last colossal effort to save himself. He flew up to one side, landing on cold cement. The Thing slid by uttering a screeching cry, a cry that a giant dragon might give when failing to capture a desired morsel.

"Rudolph scarcely paused for breath fearing that the Thing might resume the chase and leap after him. Little did he know how essential steel tracks were to its progress.

"The rooster, by happy chance, found the exit from the subterranean cavern and his face was the personification of triumphant relief as he bounced up the iron steps into the cool night air. He gazed about in bewilderment, for the surroundings were not familiar. A vast strip of water stretched before him reflecting the myriad lights on wharves and boat. A bird-like instinct told him that his home was on the other side of this river.

"He glanced at a clock. Twenty minutes to four! In five minutes he must be back, or else—his golden brain did not realize the fearful consequences if the Heckscher Building should topple; it only meant that he could no longer roost on such a desirable tower. But that alone served as a stimulant, for where could one behold such a view: Central Park, that glittering Hotel Plaza, which he enjoyed towering above, and fashionable Fifth Avenue—he was a devotee of fashion."

"I would have known it," said Agnes disapprovingly.

"Ah, yes, it was worth his most supreme efforts, so with a cluck and a jump he soared into the air. Though Rudolph was a superior fowl, having mastered the art of flight, his vitality was dangerously low, for even golden wings could tire."

"Golden wings could never tire," piped Agnes scornfully. "That old rooster was painted or else just plain brass."

"His pulse quickened perceptibly with each flap of his wings. Rudolph realized that he could not hold out much longer. The river was wider than he had calculated. He dipped waterwards; a slight reflection accompanied him, like the lurking spirit of death. A lusty, 'TOOT TOOT,' shrilled behind him.

"'Gabriel!' said Rudolph aloud."

"Oh! Does he read the Bible?" queried Agnes. It was evident that the rooster had risen in her estimation.

"Rudolph turned, expecting to see a glorified rooster swooping down upon him with a trumpet in his beak. No. Instead, there on the water rushed the Thing, foaming at the mouth and yelling like a cannibal.

"Poor Rudolph wished that he had succumbed in the tunnel, then and there, and had it over with. But it would end soon, for the rooster turned and flew directly towards the spot the creature's mouth must be. His vision clouded. The glaze of death! He could fairly hear the monster's jaws close upon him and a faint smile lighted his countenance as he thought of the disorder his metallic self would cause in the Thing's digestive organs.

"He alighted on something. What was it? Probably a tooth. He closed his eyes and shuddered. Nothing happened! Seconds were like eons until finally he cautiously peered from under one blue eyelid. Both eyes popped open. His hilarious giggles slid up and down the scale like a kitten on the keys. Rudolph was on a ferry boat!"

"Who would have thought it!" exclaimed Agnes.

"Ecstatically Rudolph twirled 'round and 'round on one leg as if he were on a pivot, too blithe to notice that the voluminous smoke from the stack covered him with soot. One would swear that he was just an ordinary black leghorn. His happy state of mind soon ceased when he thought of what time it must be. He flew to the Captain's look-out to inquire the time.

"'It's just ten minutes to four,' said the old captain, 'and this clock is about five minutes fast.' Rudolph was off in a jiffy.

* * *

"'We never should have let him go,' said one of the Heckscher sprites.

"'A half a minute yet. Heavens, think of the mess!'

"'Did I feel something tremble?' asked another.

"Something did tremble; in fact, one brick had slid out and then—slid back again! Rudolph had landed on his perch!

"He rocked wildly back and forth in efforts to gain his equilibrium, his heart beating furiously—nerves, you know; but he was back, though scarcely recognizable, due to that dense coating of soot. A timely shower remedied that, and, when the clouds cleared away to let the dawn slip through, no one knew the difference."

"I did," declared Agnes, "for the other morning when I was out walking I noticed a teeny weeny bit of black on the tip of his bill."

T. P., Grade IX.

SAVE THE MARK!

TING-A-LING-A-LING! I rolled over and gradually came to the realization that to-day was Friday and that the final marks were to be computed that afternoon. "Well," thought I, "if I shine in my lessons to-day they'll give me a good mark for the term, maybe."

Five seconds later I was gulping scalding cocoa and munching a roll. Ten seconds after that I climbed on a bus to dash to school to do some homework. What earthly good homework at such a time could do, I can't now possibly imagine, but at any rate that thought entered my head and stuck. Never before or after have I ridden on such a slow bus, but at last I reached school, raced to my locker, seized a book, and started to study Greek.

I was deep in the mysteries of that dead language when the nine o'clock bell interrupted my studies and brought back to my mind the fact that I had had my last Greek lesson for the week the day before. With a dejected air I strode to my locker, and removing what I supposed to be my math. book, entered math. class.

"Francis," said Miss Kipple addressing me, "please read the first paragraph on page 287 aloud."

I opened my book to page 287, glanced at the first paragraph and began,

"*O, to be in England,*
Now that April's there,
And whoever wakes——"

The laughs of the class and Miss Kipple's expression made me turn the book over; I saw the title, "Palgrave's Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics."

"Well, Francis," said Miss Kipple, "that's rather flowery mathematics for so early in the morning. Louise, will you please read the paragraph?"

Needless to say, that episode wrecked my chances of a passing grade in math.

Thoughts of the next period were more cheering. Fine Arts is not my forte, to be sure, but to-day we were to have an excursion to the museum where you can, by intelligent maneuvering, keep some cases between yourself and the instructor, thus avoiding the possibility of being asked any embarrassing questions. Besides, if we returned late enough, I could take my lunch during French period, as my lunch period would be cut short, if you know what I mean.

Everything worked well except that we got back on time, so I was unable to skip part of French class. However, my glimpses of the models of the Coliseum, Parthenon, etc., helped my appetite and despite the misfortunes of the day I ate a hearty meal.

With my vocal chords carefully adjusted to the intricate mechanical effects required by him who would converse freely in the French language, I swallowed hastily the last bite of a baked apple and hastened to French class. There I was called upon to conjugate some French verbs.

Perhaps the presence in the room of Mr. Coffin, the teacher of that dead language, Greek, confused me; at any rate I construed some Greek, much to the delight of the class, who thought I was making fun of the classical teacher. I was innocent of any such intention; but as the French was lacking and the Greek was wrong, I lost caste with both departments.

A half an hour is not an infinite period and at last the closing bell rang. Before it stopped ringing, I was in the corridor breathing freely, for only chemistry and gym. remained. In chemistry we had been doing experimental work, so I could get through that easily, and who's afraid of gym.?

Much to my distress, however, in chemistry Mr. Topper, the instructor, asked us to sit up in front, and there he promptly sounded our wells of information.

"Josephine," he inquired, "what happens when you pour hot concentrated sulfuric acid on zinc?"

Josephine knew! Not the answer to the question: no, no! She knew that she didn't know and said so.

Mr. Topper said something about too many "pink teas," "getting lost in the fog," etc., and passed the question on to me. I also knew I didn't know, but I didn't say so. What I did say was:

"Well, sir, you get a chemical reaction between the hydrogen of the acid and the hydrogen of the zinc, forming water and evolving carbon dioxide gas——"

"Oh, you do, do you?" satirically from Mr. Topper. "That's news to me."

"Yes, sir, well, sir, the residue——"

"So there's a residue, is there?" His tone was charged, but I missed it somehow.

"Yes, sir," I went on, encouraged. "The residue, zinc hydrate and hydrochloric acid, unite to form hydrogen sulfide and lead sulfate, an insoluble salt——"

"What!"

"An insoluble salt," I repeated to gain time to think. "If you want to continue further you dissolve the lead sulfate in water and add the combination of hydrogen sulfide and carbon dioxide. The hydrogen in the hydrogen sulfide explodes——"

"Explodes?" he interrupted witheringly. "That's obliging of it."

"Yes, sir; explodes and scatters sulfur all over the room, while the oxygen puts out the fire——"

"Oxygen! Puts out fire!"

"Yes, sir; puts out the fire, and the carbon forms in pink sticks along the ceiling."

"Pink sticks of carbon! Great Scott! Well, Francis," he said, glowering at me over his glasses, "thank you for the recitation. It confirms me in the mark I have thought of giving you for the term."

And that was that.

"Well, anyhow," I thought, "gym. is next and there I shall make a good mark."

But the notice on the gymnasium door read simply:

TO THE SENIOR HIGH BOYS. NO GYM. TODAY
C. K. Thompson, Director.

"Well," I mused, "he didn't need to take the afternoon off to compute my grade!"

T. S., Grade X.

SECRET HISTORY OF THE COUNT DE REMI

How the much-discussed "Remi Manuscript" came to be among the discarded text books and waste papers swept up in the annual June clean-up of the Lincoln School of Teachers College, New York City, New York, is a matter now puzzling eminent literary men of the country. I cannot attempt to enumerate their theories in the limited space allowed me by the editors, though all are plausible. Some skepticism has been shown by the general public, who regard the discovered document as merely a French exercise book. These critics, however, fail to appreciate the sequence and historical significance of the manuscript. The following extracts, illuminated with explanatory notes, will, it is hoped, convince the reader of this magazine that the battered French note book is none other than the diary of a Royalist during the Terror.

One senses immediately the atmosphere of secrecy and intrigue characteristic of that period. With engaging frankness the writer begins.

Mardi le vingt trois octobre.

Then he astounds with these statements:

Je ne suis pas français. Je suis américain. Je suis à Paris. *Je ne suis pas en France.*

The subtle mystery of this seeming contradiction grips the reader and helps him to perceive in the jottings of the following day very great significance:

Je suis assis derrière la porte, devant une fenêtre.

That the writer should be behind the door is not in itself remarkable and might be due to diffidence, but that he seeks, at the same time, a position in front of the window indicates the degree to which this naturally retiring man is willing to expose himself for a cause.

Then comes the first allusion to his devoted friend, the Count de Remi:

Mercredi le six novembre
Remi n'est pas un méchant garçon.

Was ever the admiration of friend for friend more glowingly expressed?

II

The remainder of the diary—for diary you must now agree it is—is devoted chiefly to the young Count. Very early he is in peril. Someone seeks to undo him.

Lundi le sept novembre.
Je suis à Paris
Tu es à Paris
Il est à Paris ! ! ! !

Thus is recorded—the italics and the exclamation points are mine—the warning which the writer dared every risk to convey to the Count. "He is in Paris!!!"

The writer struggles against heavy odds and many a page breathes discouragement. Plunged in gloom he writes,

Vilain, plus vilain, le plus vilain.
Malheureux, plus malheureux, le plus malheureux.

Then in frenzy he seizes a blue pencil—although the script is seemingly that of an older hand, a clever trick to deceive possible enemies—and scrawls across the page the desperate phrase, "Très mal."

III

From time to time appear tender passages, which placed together throw light on Remi's romantic attachment for the daughter of an enemy. The following bare conversations are recorded,

Je demande
Tu demandes
Elle demande
Nous demandons

What is it they all "demand"? The mystery is cleared immediately.

J'embrasse
Tu embrasses
Elle embrasse
Nous embrassons.

In this simple plighting of the troth the friends of both parties must have been joyfully present, for the document goes on to state, "Vous embrassez, ils embrassent, elles embrassent."

Realizing that they have been possibly a little premature, the young people discuss his prospects. (The mystery of the numbers has not yet been cleared up satisfactorily.)

"1. J'ai deux maisons," declares Remi stoutly.

"2. Ai-je deux maisons?" falters the girl, meaning, "Am I really to have two houses?"

"3. Je suis ici!" says the Count, his chest swelling with pride. This is colloquial for, "Trust me!" It is presumed that at this point Remi folds her to him, for after a pause he murmurs with dizzying sense of unreality,

"4. Suis-je ici?" Then the girl breaks away with a start, crying:

"5. Il a un chien!" referring to her father, the revolutionist.

"6. A-t-il un chien?" anxiously from Remi. A bright thought occurs to the girl. She inquires excitedly:

"7. As-tu un singe?" Who but a clever French girl would have remembered at such a time to ask a man if he had a monkey!

"8. J'ai un singe," he announces proudly. This forethought on the part of her lover reassures her.

It is evident that the writer acts as lookout during their meetings, for the girl seems to be instructing him on several occasions. Only the climax can be given here:

"Je cause avec Remi," she says. "Vous donnez le mouchoir à Alice." Alice is, no doubt, the faithful maid. "Vous gardez le jardin!" You see, they still fear that the father will learn their secret.

Having disposed of the writer of the diary for the moment, Remi and his lady-love continue together until the alarm is given, "*Ils marchent dans la maison!*" The father and probably the dog approach.

"Elle pleure dans la pièce." Alas! she is discovered and the feminine nerves give way. Aghast, she whispers, "Il porte le livre," the family Bible, suggesting disinheritance.

"Nous ne restons pas assis," French Terror slang for, "We won't give in!"

That night, we know, the two disappeared, leaving this note,

Je ne retournerai pas
Il ne retournera pas
Elle ne retournera pas

But "Le Futur," written at the top of the page, indicates the hope to return.

IV

Count Remi and the revolutionist's daughter encounter financial difficulties, as this brave letter to the author will show:

Nous avons seulement un peu d'argent, mais nous avons une vache. La vache donne quelque litres du lait. Je soigne les légumes et la vache aussi.

One sees that the Count's domestic hardships, in addition to his personal danger, weigh upon the faithful diarist. He gives us a sad picture of the straits to which the nobleman was reduced when he writes, "Remi vend les légumes dans les rues des villages."

It is to be feared that the revolutionist's daughter confined herself strictly to housework. Often, in those difficult days, must the girl have recalled with bitterness the monkey and the two houses with which Remi had baited her.

Later there are whole nights of watching to save the Count from disaster.

Lundi le seize décembre.

Il est onze heures et demi. Il est minuit. Il est une heure. Il est deux heures. Il est trois heures et un quart. Il est cinq heures moins six minutes.

Then, as the night drags on and the loneliness becomes more oppressive, he ceases to count the hours, but, with bowed head, writes,

Homme misérable!
Les hommes misérables!
Des hommes misérables!

During another of these anxious vigils the naturally thoughtful man thus philosophizes: "Remi est ici. Remi, est-il ici? Est-ce que Remi est ici? N'est-ce pas que Remi est ici?"

Then comes the shock of Remi's capture. The numerals are most significant:

1. Nous entrâmes dans la maison.
2. Nous demandâmes le bon Remi.
5. Il n'est pas ici, dit la femme.
4. Où est-il? je demandai.

Although the question is boldly put, the reader detects a tremor of premonition that proves to be only too well-founded.

The last entry is not dated and the writing is noticeably unsteady:

Mourir, mourant, mort.
Je meurs
Tu meurs
Il est mort!

On that instant a spirit of resignation asserts itself and he writes in large red letters, evidently his own life blood:

Bien!

M. V., Grade XII.

THE COMING OF THE LIGHT

"Tonight in England," remarked the Merchant Mehmet, placing his blue china coffee cup on the brass table, "your countrymen celebrate the birth of the Prophet, Jesus of Nazareth."

"Yes, tomorrow is Christmas Day," replied the English Consul, glancing about the fairly crowded Coffee House.

The darting, everchanging shadows on the whitewashed walls and ceiling, caused by the flickering flames in the burnished brazier, gave a suggestion of the unreal, which was heightened by the shrouded figures of the frequenters of the establishment, but dimly visible in the faint ruddy glow from the coals.

"And tonight we Jews light the seventh candle of Hanakkah," announced Ben Izra, the Rabbi of Jaffa, who completed the trio at the shining brass table. All the other occupants of this gathering place of the men of Jaffa were sitting cross-legged on cushions next to the hard-packed earthen floor in an irregular circle with the glimmering purple coals as the center.

"We Moslems also hold this day sacred," said Mehmet, addressing the Briton, "for it is the end of the fast of Ramazan, and on the morrow we celebrate the great Feast of Bairam."

The English Consul in his sandy tweeds presented a marked contrast to the Rabbi, with his long white beard falling on his black silken robe, and to the brilliantly attired Turkish merchant, whose bright green blouse and costly, glittering rings, made quite a conspicuous figure amidst the somber greys of the Coffee House.

Said the Englishman, "Our Christmas, in the countries of the North of Europe, really has a two-fold significance. Part of our celebration is to glorify a dark green evergreen tree with a multitude of blazing, colored lights. The drooping limb of the forest pine is the symbol of the dark and dreary winter. After tomorrow the days will begin to lengthen. It is significant that He, whom we worship, was born in the midst of the celebration of the coming of the Light."

"Yes, the coming of the Light. When Mahomet gave the Koran to his people, it was the coming of the Light." As the Merchant Mehmet turned his head to say this, a great sparkling emerald smouldering in his high orange turban gave forth a million dancing reflections.

"The Koran, your Book of Light, does it not contain much that is in our Testament?" asked Ben Izra, the Rabbi.

"It is true that many of your prophets are also ours," mused the Merchant Mehmet. "It was only when your ancestors refused to accept Allah as the one and mighty prophet that he turned in anger against you."

"Mahomet, your Prophet, expected more support from the men of Jerusalem, my ancestors, than he obtained, when he first brought forth his idea of One God in Heaven," returned Ben Izra.

II

At this point there was a slight disturbance at the door of the Coffee House, caused by the appearance of a group of travelling Dervishes; these now slowly filed through the doorway and took their seats on the floor next to the glowing brazier, where room was hastily made for them by the other customers of the establishment. All of the Dervishes were closely wrapped in large white cloaks.

"They are the Dancing Dervishes!" whispered the Consul tensely to his companions. "They are considered very holy all through the East."

"We will be perfectly safe if we keep absolutely quiet," answered the Merchant Mehmet.

Abruptly the Dervishes emitted a sound like the low murmuring of bees on a summer day. As they did so, they swayed back and forth. Gradually the sound grew louder, now like the insistent beating of the ocean on the rocks. The noise seemed to have a definite monotonous rhythm. One of the Holy Men started throbbing on a primitive kind of tom-tom, made of a skin stretched over a gourd.

Slowly, but surely, the murmuring grew more and more insistent. The white figures swayed to and fro, farther and farther. Their voices kept up a steady crescendo. They sounded now like the rumbling thunder in the distance, which is the forerunner of a storm. "All*ah!* All*ah!* All*ah!*" were the words to which they swung in rhythm, and as their white muffled bodies swayed, the black reflections on the walls swayed with them.

Louder grew the drum, and more penetrating became the sound, like the surf pounding against the beach in the midst of a wild storm. "ALL*AH!* ALL*AH!* ALL*AH!*" louder and louder to keep pace with an ever-mounting religious fury.

Suddenly one of the white figures stood up, foaming at the mouth, calling "All*ah!* All*ah!*" as he whirled round and round in a frenzy, while the others, one by one, joined this wild giddy dance. Abruptly one of the Dervishes gave a leap and darted through the door. He was immediately followed by the rest of the devotees, and soon the night had swallowed them.

"Thank Heaven, I posted a strong guard around the synagogue," said Rabbi Ben Izra meaningly, as he watched the retreating figure of the last Mad Dervish vanish into the darkness.

"When these Dancing Dervishes have one of their frenzies it is well to beware of them," admitted Mehmet the Merchant. A stray shaft of light found an answering gleam in the smouldering depths of his beautiful sea-green emerald.

"I am glad that I didn't give the military attachés of the Consulate leave of absence tonight," said the Englishman, thoughtfully taking a sip from his coffee cup. A great many of the customers of the Coffee House had followed the Dervishes, so that now the place was rather empty.

"Christmas, the Coming of the Light," he murmured, looking thoughtfully at his two companions. What an ill-assorted pair they were. And yet how many characteristics they shared in common. Mohammedan, Jew, and Christian, each one well represented his race.

"However, tradition says," said the learned Ben Izra, as if replying to the Englishman's thoughts, "that Mahomet heard Christian preaching at the fair of Ukaz, and he probably heard more when he conducted the caravans of Khadija. Gospel stories, derived apparently from such works as the Gospel of the Nativity, occur in the Koran."

"We Moslems," said Mehmet, "believe that with his revelation God also sent an apostle or prophet to each people. Several of these are mentioned in the Koran: Moses, the Prophet of the Jews; Isa (Jesus) the Prophet of the Christians. Mahomet is not only the Moslem apostle, but he is the Seal of the Prophets, the last and greatest one."

III

As Mehmet finished speaking, faint music could be heard in the distance. As it grew nearer it could be distinguished as a hymn.

"It is a procession of the Monks advancing to the Cathedral," explained Ben Izra.

The hymn they were chanting was in the canon form, and the rich voices of the Monks made a beautiful harmony, as each one of them sang a differentpart. "Peace on earth, good will to men," were the words which floated through the open doorway in an ever-increasing volume. "The birth of our Lord was the Coming of the Light," they chanted as the procession moved nearer.

Even before the Monks could be seen, their torches heralded their approach, flashing lurid red across the shadowy walls of the Coffee House. "And now all the tribes of the Earth shall live in Universal Brotherhood." The brown robed leader of the procession was visible through the narrow doorway. "He is the Star of Hope; He is the source of Light," they chanted as the procession followed their leader past the door of the Coffee House.

Every third one carried a blazing pine torch, which gave an unnatural ruddiness to the Monks' ascetic faces. "For the Birth of our Lord was the Coming of the Light," they chanted, as the sound of their voices slowly died away into the distance, "Peace on earth, good will to men."

The violet coals of the brazier were the only source of light in the room, and as the night grew older the embers burned down and grew fainter. The three men gazed into them, each one in deep reverie. It was so dark now that they could hardly distinguish each other over the yellow brass table. Suddenly a little side door was opened and the room became flooded with light.

The cause of this unexpected brilliancy was a large, copper, seven-branched candle stick, bearing six twinkling red candles, which the venerable Jewish proprietor of the Coffee House was holding over his head with both hands. Six of the candles were lit, but the seventh in the center was dark.

The light caused the emerald in Mehmet's orange turban to look like a burning coal of green fire. The shining brass table reflected the candles in a hundred burnished mirrors.

Slowly the old man moved toward the seat of the Rabbi of Jaffa, who rose to receive him. When the old proprietor was quite close to him, the Rabbi bowed his head in prayer for an instant and then, taking the candles, he placed them on the shining brass table.

With great dignity the Rabbi took what looked like a long pair of tongs from a corner of the room. He then walked to the brazier and picked out a glowing coal with the end of the tongs. He returned to the table and after again bowing his head, he blew on the coal and touched it to the central candle, which, after flickering a little, burst into flame.

"The Coming of the Light," murmured Ben Izra as he handed the candles back to the old man, who took them and slowly walked out of the room.

The resulting darkness seemed more intense after the short brilliancy. And still, as they sat there, the coals burned lower and the room became more and more shadowy.

The stars twinkled dimly through the open door, and by the pale glow from the outside the shrouded figures of the other frequenters of the house could dimly be seen curled up on their cushions, asleep. The trio at the table were the only wakeful ones in that warm dark room.

IV

Suddenly Mehmet jerked his head backward and rose in an attitude of listening. The eyes of his companions followed his movements questioningly. At the same moment they became conscious of a far-distant roar, as of many voices in conflict. The flitting shapes of running men flashed past the door of the Coffee House.

The men looked at each other askance. "What could it be?" was the question which their eyes spoke. The roar seemed to swell momently.

All at once one of the shapes dashed into the room, running from one to the other of the sleeping men and scanning their faces eagerly. Just as the trio at the brass table arose to inquire into the disturbance, the figure flew toward the Consul with a glad, anxious cry, who with a start recognized one of his military attachês.

"The Dervishes are leading an attack on the Synagogue!" he cried. "They are in the midst of one of their mad frenzies and are murdering everyone in their path. We have mustered together some of the Consulate, who are awaiting your command to march and attempt to quell the massacre."

By this time all the other inmates of the Coffee House were awake. The trio at the brass table frantically pushed through the crowded doorway, and were immediately separated by the night.

V

The next morning the Consul sat at his desk poring over the lists of those that had been killed the night before in the attack on the Synagogue. Near him sat his chief military attachê. At the head of the list appeared the name of Rabbi Ben Izra, the leading Jew of Jaffa.

"I wonder how he met his fate," mused the Consul, staring at the list.

"I don't know, Your Excellency," replied the attachê, "but one of the officers who was near him in the fight says that he was killed by the hand of a Turk who wore a great sparkling emerald in his high orange turban."

Below the window in the street a procession of monks from their night-long service in the cathedral passed chanting a hymn: "And it was the Coming of the Light: Peace on Earth, Good Will to Men."

H. F., Grade XI.

THE WORST CLASS

It was a class meeting, though it certainly did not resemble one, as no business was being transacted and no attempt at order was being made. The members of the Worst Class in the School, which had at the time of this writing reached the rank of Seniors, were distributed casually about the room in attitudes expressing varying degrees of sloth. The girls, on one side, were absorbed in earnest conversation about one of those mysterious subjects which the females of the species always seem to be discussing. The boys, on the other side, were variously occupied, some gazing out of the window, some half-heartedly doing their homework, some playing tit-tat-toe on the blackboard. At a desk in the corner was seated the student chairman, doing nothing in particular.

Upon this scene of idyllic idleness intruded a lower classman—class meetings were held simultaneously in this school—intruded with that self-conscious air and somewhat swaggering gait that distinguish one entrusted with an announcement. The chairman roused himself suddenly, banged violently on the table with his gavel until the class had subsided into a sort of semi-quiet, and then signalled the visitor to proceed.

'The Junior Class," he rattled off, "wishes to invite the Senior Class to a special April Fools' party, on Friday, April first. It will be held in the Assembly Room, and will last from three to three-thirty. There will be no dancing. Are there any questions?"

Without waiting for a reply to this apparently superfluous query, he departed.

II

It may be explained right now that the epithet "The Worst Class in the School" was by no means a misnomer. The assemblage of students whose class meeting has been described above had brought the name with them when they had graduated from the Elementary School into the Junior High School, and they made no effort during their first year in the latter body to belie the name. Any trouble whatsoever in the way of disorder and infringement of rules, written and unwritten, was laid without hesitation to the door of that seventh grade: and sooner or later the culprit was sure to turn up from that region. Broken windows, spit-balls, catapults, water pistols set loose in crowded halls, and wrestling matches at inopportune times and in inopportune places were the order of the day.

As High School Freshmen two years later, they still bore, and deserved, the derogatory title. Though no longer so obstreperously wicked as in their seventh grade days, they were by no means reformed, and succeeded in being in some way at the bottom of all the trouble which took place in the school. They had developed a marvelous technique in the evasion of work, a degree of skill in coöperative non-performance, deception, and general indifference to studies that were the admiration of all the other classes and the despair of the faculty.

At the stage of their existence where this story begins they had not changed their ways. The innumerable responsibilities of a Senior Class had not sobered them in the least. When they could they had passed their jobs on to the Juniors, which did not tend to increase that class's love for them. What duties that remained were discharged with the least possible amount of thought and the greatest possible amount of inefficiency. With the few solitary things in which they took an interest, it was that kind of concern which throws a monkey wrench into moving machinery to see what will happen. The Student Council, for instance, had degenerated under their loving care into a flippant debating society with a tendency to pass rash motions. The class finances were literally in an unspeakable state, for no one, not even the treasurer, knew how much was in the treasury, or how much had been spent

Neither was this model class any too popular with the lower grades. The general patronizing attitude was irksome, especially as everyone knew just what a bad class the patrons were; and the constant passing of the buck was also annoying. Some had specific grievances, the Sophomores particularly; they did not forget that only this year, in a fit of special wickedness, the Seniors had stayed away in a body from the lower class's Party, thus completely spoiling the festivities. The class Party was a serious school institution.

III

Having made clear the character of the class with which we have to deal—what a precious lot of bad sheep they are, in short—we take the liberty of returning to our muttons.

When the issuer of the invitation recorded above had left the room, the class did not relapse into lethargy again. A stir of awakening energy was apparent. Someone even rose to acquire recognition, a thing very rarely done. Usually business was conducted without any formalities whatever.

"I move," remarked that conscientious individual portentously, "that a committee of one be appointed by the chair to decline the invitation of the Junior Class, giving any reason it sees fit. I simply remind this learned body that the party being on April first, the Juniors will try to pull something off. It will probably be both dull and detrimental to the dignity which we ought to have as Senior Class."

"Aw, that's stale," commented another member from the floor. This one did not trouble to demand recognition; he just spoke. "That joke was played out last fall when we stayed away from the Soph's Party. We'll get in Dutch if we try it again."

"Yeh," sarcastically returned the first speaker, who was still on his feet, "I suppose you want us to fall meekly into the trap, and go to their dizzy party, and let them play any tricks on us they want to, like—like lambs to the—uh—slaughter." He sat down with a great show of injured dignity, amid giggles at the classical turn with which he had seen fit to terminate his oration.

"I should like to have it proved," put in a third individual, "that the Juniors have any ulterior motives before I should consent to burble about lambs to the—uh—slaughter."

The first speaker was on his feet in an instant.

"I just ask you," he thundered, "if, when a class noted for popular jokes, and none too popular with other classes, is invited to attend a party on All Fools' Day and if that party is specifically described as an April Fool party, and if there isn't going to be any dancing, doesn't it look pretty much as if that class, that is, the class which is invited, is in for getting a little of its own medicine handed out to it?"

"You may be right, but I insist that we'll get in Dutch by staying away."

By this time the class was thoroughly aroused. For the next few minutes the discussion was heated, violent, and general. The impotent chairman, banging on the desk with gavel, book, and anything else that came handy, only increased the din. For a few moments nothing could be made out except disjointed phrases.

"Say, what do you think we——'

"Shut up. It's a real good——"

"I can just see——"

"Order! Order! Can't you——"

"If you'd only keep——"

"—can suggest something better——"

"—make more noise——"

"How about you?"

And so on. Order was suddenly restored, however, by external forces in the form of a teacher with some bone or other to pick with the class's management of affairs. When he left, the excitement had cooled down, so that without much discussion the invitation to the Party was officially accepted. After a Senior had been selected and dispatched to discharge the formalities connected with this acceptance, however, the discussion was renewed.

"I still think that something ought to be done about it." The originator of the whole contest was talking.

"Well, suggest something then," blurted the chairman, "if you're so anxious for trouble."

"That's for you to do. I did my share in pointing out the need for action."

This sentiment was greeted with vociferous disapproval, and several minutes were spent in an attempt to convince its author that it was based on totally erroneous premises. Suddenly, however, the class was stilled by a loud shout indicating inspiration.

"I've got it!" cried this individual. "Why not pretend to stay away but really be going to come? That is, I mean, say that we can't come just at the last moment, and then turn up after all. The whole thing will be sort of an April Fool stunt, you know. We'll have the start on them that way, and the teachers won't be able to jaw us for behaving in a manner unbefitting a Senior Class." Much merriment greeted this last remark, which was delivered with biting sarcasm. It was a class joke, apparently.

"Not such a bad sort of idea," was a judicious comment after the mirth had subsided, "but just how are you going to work it?"

That, indeed, was the question. As the general idea appealed to the class's impish sort of humor, there was little discussion as to its appropriateness. The mechanics of the thing, however, the exact way in which it should be carried into effect, was quite another thing. Finally the class had to give it up, and just before the end of the class meeting period the matter was intrusted to a committee.

IV

Class meeting a week later. The committee's plan, doped out with great exertion, considering the class to which its members belonged, was being laid before the assemblage.

". . . After the last period has let out, the Seniors will get together in this room." The chairman of the committee is speaking. "When all the Juniors are safely packed in the assembly room someone who can act pretty well will be sent to the door. He will stroll in casually, and when he sees the Juniors, and is seen by them, he will pretend to be highly amused, and explain that the rest of the Seniors have left the building, thinking the party to be a fake. In the meantime the rest of the class will come downstairs with great circumspection, and when the proper moment comes they will enter the room triumphantly chanting the obvious thing to the great consternation of the Juniors.

"The obvious thing, is, of course, 'April Fool,'" he added as an afterthought.

Little interest was taken in the report, to judge from the small amount of commotion it caused. Apparently the class had exhausted belligerency during the previous class meeting. The motion for the acceptance of the plan was promptly made and passed without discussion.

"All in favor say Aye, all opposed same sign, motion's carried," mumbled the chairman.

V

As the week in which the Party was to take place dragged on towards its end the Worst Class in the School was disposed to be more and more pleased with their plan. The Party, apparently, was going to be a really big thing. The Juniors were mum to be sure, but the Sophs, who seemed to be in the secret, allowed it to be known, in strict confidence, that a part of the performance was to be a play with extreme caustic take-offs on the school in general and the Seniors in particular. Neither was the remainder of the program designed to flatter the vanity of the upper class.

When the great day finally arrived a general state of excitement prevailed, an unusual thing even before a Party. The tension manifested itself with the Juniors in much running to and fro, and in a tendency to hold committee meetings in the halls, where weighty matters were discussed in whispers, and which dispersed guiltily at the approach of a Senior, and with the Seniors in great hilarity and inattention during classes.

As to the nature of the coming festivities, no further information was obtainable. Towards three o'clock, however, a sound of hammering was audible from outside the assembly room.

VI

The school seemed singularly quiet to the Seniors as they came from their last class, which had let out a little late. This was natural, however; the other classes had probably gone downstairs already. The conspirators did not take the trouble, therefore, to congregate in a special room, but stayed in the upper halls until the time should come for them to perpetrate their little joke. After about three minutes of nervous waiting—five were required in the original plan—they decided that enough time had elapsed, and the class president was dispatched to inform the expectant Juniors that their guests of honor had supposedly departed.

When he arrived at the Assembly Room he was somewhat surprised to find the door closed. Also, a certain ominous silence emanated from the room. A sudden fear of ambush induced the Senior to open the door cautiously. Nothing happened, however, so he cast off his unpleasant premonitions and entered boldly. Then he stopped. The room was absolutely empty. Not a sign of life.

The Seniors were called in but were only able to confirm the verdict. A search in all the nooks and crannies that might possibly conceal a Junior, or anybody else for that matter, revealed no one.

There followed a heated discussion. The class was not sure whether to treat the whole thing as a hoax or to wait around for a while on the theory that the Juniors had been held late by an overindulgent professor.

In the meantime the Worst Class were foiled in their attempt to vent their wickedness in a legitimate way; they were all filled up with the desire to do mischief, but had no means to satisfy this craving. Suddenly a way presented itself in the form of the curtain to the stage. It was against the rules, of course, to touch the thing, but at this moment a small placard announced that the curtain was out of order and it appealed to the honor, civic pride, patriotism, and what-not of the members of the School, earnestly requesting that no attempt be made to raise it.

That was enough. Curtain out of order? What more simple than to wind it up? What more delightful than to hear the janitor's remarks when he found it had been tampered with? Two boys struggled to see who could first consummate the feat while the class looked on, a new light in their eyes.

The curtain went up easily. Apparently nothing serious was wrong with it. But what was this! As it rose an enormous sign disclosed itself. Fixed at the back of the stage were letters twenty feet high; they formed the words, "FOOLED."

S. R., Grade X.

SOCIAL LIFE IN A SOUTHWEST CORRAL

Nearly every ranch in the Southwest where there are horses has a corral. This is an enclosure, varying in size with the number of horses to be put in it, divided off with a wire or log fence. Quite frequently there is an arbor in it which in the summer is thatched so that the animals can get shade. Of course nothing green grows in the enclosure, as the horses eat it all.

There are two classes of corral. One is known as the feed corral and has a large manger in the middle and a drinking trough, so the horses can feed and water themselves. This type is used especially when the horses are not in constant use. The other type is just an enclosure with no hay or water in it. Where such an enclosure is used the horses have stalls and are fed morning and night and are put in the corral after they are through eating. This is done because, unlike the Eastern horse, the Western horse's feet are injured by standing on the hard boards; also it saves a lot of stall cleaning. The corral I am going to talk about is of this second type, holding thirty horses.

The animals are, of course, untied and free to roam as they please in this enclosure. As soon as they are brought in, all sweaty from being used, they are turned into the corral and have a delicious roll. It is great sport to watch them smell around for a soft place and then get down and roll back and forth, scratching their backs and sides, covering themselves with the fine dry dust and shaking their manes and tails. During this process they grunt and sigh, their feet in the air, behaving more like happy dogs after a bath than anything else I can think of. When they are through they get up and shake themselves. Then the particles of dust fly off them and they emerge out of the cloud, dry and happy.

During the hot mornings and afternoons when they are idle, they stand in lines with their heads hung down and their eyes half shut, now and then lazily swishing their tails, the very picture of Nirvana. They always stand side by side and head to tail, to keep the flies off each other's heads with their tails. They stand with one hind leg cocked up under them, resting it, as all horses do, their only motion being lashing their tails, changing legs, and now and again blinking.

II

Sometimes, however, they feel "peppy" and have grand fights and games. They fight almost entirely with their teeth, standing face to face, ears laid back, and making passes at each other with their heads, trying to nip their opponent's neck, chest, or foreleg. Now and then one will give a loud scream through his nose, rear up and try to hit his opponent with his front feet. They sometimes do it together and fan the air with their hoofs, for all the world like two boxers. It is only when they get angry that they turn around and try to kick each other, mule fashion, screaming the while. In our corral these playful fights would go on for hours, there being some pugnacious horses who were always sparring with each other. Others were very peaceful and almost never fought.

Their great game was usually played when they were turned into the corral after the morning feed, and on crisp mornings during the winter months. Then they would all tear around, full speed, each trying to nip the other on the hip or flank as he approached him from the rear. Another pastime was chasing the mares around. The mares were much more peacful than the horses and always stood apart, although some of them could fight like devils when aroused. A few horses would come up behind the mares and nip them. Then they were off; the mares fleeing and the horses trying to nip them from behind while the mares kicked at them furiously. These games would go on till more and more participants got tired and dropped out. Finally there would be only one or two pairs of warriors left sparring while the others dozed.

My horse had a game which he used to play a lot. I always let him into the corral later than the others in the evening, so he would have more time to eat, as he was rather thin. Immediately he would nip the horses that were lying down and force them up. He did this so often that I wonder they didn't kill him the next morning.

III

The most interesting thing about the behavior of the horses in the corral, I think, is their social system. In the first place there was a boss of the corral, who apparently was the best fighter. In the particular corral I am talking about he was a big buckskin horse called Chief. I only saw him fight twice, but yet he was absolute and, except in one case, undisputed boss. Whenever he came up behind a horse who was standing in one of the head-to-tail rows, the horse would move out and give Chief his place without a word, so to speak. Then there was a next-to-boss for whom any but Chief would move, and so on down, till after the third or fourth the distinctions were less marked.

The boss, as I have said, did not necessarily fight much, but there was a sorrel horse named Dick who was always fighting and stirring up trouble. Although he got a number of awful welts and cuts, he did not seem to stand very high. He was a new horse at the first of the year and seemed to have great ambitions. In fact, he fought everything in sight. Once he tackled Chief and sparred for about two hours with him. Chief, however, remained boss and Dick never, to my knowledge, fought him again. By fighting in these instances I do not mean kicking, but the biting and sparring which I described above.

There was another young horse who fought a great deal. He was very young and as fresh as paint. This horse used to disturb the siestas of the older and more staid members. Finally an old mare, named Pepper, got tired of him and forced him into a corner. Then she turned around and the two kicked at each other, tail to tail, full blast, at the same time screaming at the top of their lungs. Everybody rushed to the spot and, when finally Pepper let up, examined the combatants. The young horse had a nasty horse-shoe shaped wound on one of his hind legs, which was bleeding so profusely that we were at first afraid that the artery had been cut. Our fears, however, proved to be groundless. Pepper, the wise animal, had not even a hair displaced.

The owner kept the youngster out of the corral after that so I do not know whether the horse would have profited by the lesson or not.

The horses were also all divided up into cliques, ranging from the very highest society down. That is, certain groups of horses always used to stand together. I imagine the highest society was the group that stood with Chief. He and one small, mild horse seemed to be inseparable companions and always stood together unmolested by any other horses. Those horses that had been bred together and whose masters rode a lot together sometimes grouped, but not always

IV

My horse, Ambrose, was a rough, desert-born and -bred pony. There were two more like him in the corral, and these three stood together. I think they formed part of the good, solid middle class. Once, to my surprise and gratification, I saw Ambrose standing with Chief and his friend as though they were the oldest pals. I was overjoyed at Amby's sudden rise in the world. All that day he stood at this dizzy height, but the next day, great was my sorrow to see him, sad and crestfallen, back with his old companions. I don't know what unpardonable error he committed. I fear he must have eaten with his knife.

The mares did not stand with the horses but had their own organization. They seemed to ignore the horses entirely except when being chased by them. There were many fewer mares than horses, so they were harder to observe. They had no social distinctions that I could find, but went around by twos. They were very much more affectionate than the horses. Especially, two mares, Maggie and Molly, had an awful crush on each other. If one were let into the corral before the other she would be restless till her friend hove in sight, when she would set up a furious neighing, answered by the other. When the late one came at last they would rush to each other and would have embraced, I am sure, if they had been able. Then all day where one went the other would go, walking side by side. The horses would never do this. If one of their number left his place they would merely fill in the space and go on dozing.

There were also one or two horses who seemed not to be on friendly terms with the rest, and who sometimes stood together and often alone. One of these was quite a lady's man. He used at first to stand with certain mares a great deal, but finally they got tired of him and neither they nor the horses would have anything to do with him.

I used to wonder how they got all arranged and settled down in this system, but finally I saw something which threw some light on it. One evening when almost all the horses were in the corral a strange horse was let in. Immediately all the horses and mares woke up and formed a line behind him and walked around the corral in solemn procession, with the stranger at the head, looking him over. Then in one corner they stopped and all who wanted to, fought him. First two or three of the lesser lights like Amby would try a little sparring with him at once. After a while the bosses tried him one by one, screaming and rearing up on their hind legs. Finally Chief tried him, and when that was over the crowd dispersed while one or two others continued to play. At last they all subsided and the newcomer was left standing alone. Unfortunately he did not belong to us; he left the next day, so I could not see him find his place in the scale. I suppose that after a while he would, if a good fellow, have made friends and joined one or another of the cliques.

It seems to me that the behavior of horses is very much like the behavior of human beings. We, also, have our little cliques, our leaders and our outcasts. In fact the corral society is just like our own much simplified, except for the seeming indifference of one gender to the other, for the gregarious instincts which cause the systems are, of course, the same; but it is odd that they should take such a similar form in animals so different as the man and the horse.

W. F., Grade XII.

FAME

It began in his fourteenth year. It was then that they praised him for his swiftness of foot. The record he made that spring still stands, and at the Annual Outdoor Meet he made more points than any other two competitors. It was only a stumble at the starting line, in fact, that prevented him from gaining enough points to win the Meet for his team.

But it was not long ere the Record ate into his heart, and there engraved itself deeply. And soon he secretly conceived and cherished with miserly desire the ambition for a perfect record in scholarship also, for he was a bright boy, and the marks came easily.

This he achieved, in his fifteenth year, and having set a standard that still rests—in the office files—he turned him to other matters. Indeed, he would leave an ineradicable mark upon the memory of the school. For lo, he would institute Reforms; he would champion the cause of Right with fiery speeches, regardless of the power of the opposition; he would mold the ways of the school to his will.

And this he did, for, as we have said, he was a brilliant boy, and his arguments carried conviction. And the school was molded to his will, in his sixteenth year. Yet he was not satisfied. Indeed, there was much desire for Fame about this boy.

In his last year at school he turned his aspirations towards literature. For many months the school magazine was replete with his stories, his poems, his quips, his editorials. And lo, they were exceeding good, for he was a brilliant boy. And his work was noted and commented upon, even by the exchanges.

And he told himself in his heart that he would not be forgotten, and was well content. . . .

It was four years before he returned to the school. He came, somewhat amused at the remembrance of his youthful ambitions, but not unwilling to taste the joys of Fame and Universal Respect.

Yet for a while it seemed that none knew him, excepting his teachers.

"What, none?"

No, not precisely; there was one callow youth who professed to remember him.

"Wasn't it you," he said, "who stumbled in the hurdle race in that Outdoor Meet years ago? Yes, I remember—something—oh, yes. It lost the Meet for our team."

S. R., Grade XII.

AN ESSAY ON BROTHERS

All things are well in their place; so, methinks, are brothers. Just what their position really should be, is the question upon which the tormented Sisters' Association has been working since Adam's first daughter. Strange and varied are the versions concerning boys, particularly "brother-boys." Some girls hold that they should have equal rights with their sisters, while others are firm in the belief that all boys should be placed in a barrel and fed thru the bung-hole. I must confess that I don't agree with either of these theories. There are times when it is convenient to have the, shall I say pests, about, and there are occasions when I incline strongly to the bung-hole idea.

Everyone is entitled to have his own opinions on this matter; accordingly, I possess a set of ideas which may in some respects differ from others in the Association. At the start of this discourse I want to state that, as a whole, I would rather have one or more brothers than be an only child.

The age of the creature makes a difference. My three brothers are all younger than I, so the essay on the "Older Than Oneself Pest" must, I fear, be left to someone else.

II

Younger brothers are always up to pranks. While good, clever tricks have a personal attraction for me, those played by the small members of my family are always stupid and plain, without a sign of thrills. I recollect once, when they couldn't unlock a door from the wrong side, they brilliantly took off the keyhole plate and knob, thus allowing access to a jimmy. To their mind this was an elaborate piece of burglary, but to me it represented the usual "crack-headedness" of small boys.

Another instance, showing that their favorite pursuit was raiding, took place at 5:30 one morning. Helen, a peach of a cousin, and I had made three large platters of fudge the night before. Later, we carefully transported it to our "quarters" for safety's sake, knowing that the house was infested with boys. Before we went to bed, the doors were locked and tried, screens made secure in the windows and on the sleeping porch. As the plates of candy rested calmly on the table in the center of the room, we went to sleep feeling quite cheerful toward the world in general.

III

The sun rose and we rose, too—an hour later. Helen ambled over to the table, to sample the fudge, I suppose. She didn't, tho, for the boys had "licked the platter clean." Of course it was those infernal pests; who else would have the audacity to steal every last crumb of our labors right under our unsuspecting eyes? Two and a half minutes later we were dressed and ready to call out the bloodhounds.

It was necessary to be very systematic, to look first for finger or footprints, and do all the other things that made up full-fledged detectives. No traces of any kind were found until, as we were just giving up in disgust, I perceived two slight slits in the copper wire. Ah, the demons! They had cut two holes, thus allowing enough space to slip their fingers through and unhook the screen; and, like good workmen, they had carefully covered up their traces by locking it after them.

At this point we felt like a Scotland Yard detective, but wait!—we were to be Sherlock Holmes himself. How had they gained our sleeping porch? Easy enough. Settling themselves out on the tin roof surrounding their porch, they had climbed out on the ridge pole and had slid along that until they reached our side of the house; dropping gently down, they were directly in front of the aforementioned screen. Well, the mystery was solved, but that didn't bring back our fudge. As I have said, the boys took it; it is needless to state that we never saw that batch of candy again.

IV

It would be a very easy matter to talk for ever about the pranks played on me by my teasing brothers. I cannot remember when it started and I'm afraid it will never stop. Often have I wondered whether other sisters have the hard life that I do. There are times when my brothers are utter nuisances, chief among these being when company comes.

Geoffrey or Luther isn't only troublesome when a male calls, but likewise when some female friend arrives upon whom he has what is commonly known as a small boy crush. It is so discouraging when we have all of yesterday's tea gossip to go over and he insists on fluttering round like a moth in the vicinity of an electric bulb.

But alas, there are other disadvantages of brothers. One of the most disagreeable things of all happens when one of the pests has to speak in the school assembly. You've heard him recite it at home till you would know if he should make the slightest mistake. He always is last on the list, so it is impossible to enjoy any of the program. It is so ridiculous to feel the way I always do; of course, he will do as well as the rest, and even if he doesn't, why should I care? Certainly he has played mean enough tricks, so it would serve him right if he should make a general mess of it.

But why, I ask you, why does my heart go pit-a-pat, and cold chills race up and down my spinal column as he marches up to the platform? I gasp my relief as he sits down, after having made a half-way presentable speech. Queer, I cannot account for it, but on every such occasion my heart goes a wee bit faster and I do get hot and nervous.

Brothers do, I must admit, come in awfully handy, when you want to play tennis and there isn't anyone else around, or again, when you've eaten all the pie in the pantry and can mildly and casually suggest to elder inquiring persons that—"there are the boys." If you are an only child or have sisters, you can't do this. Sisters won't stand for it. Another thing, if you come home late, your absence is not noticed, that is, if there are brothers in the family, for their racket easily covers up any noise that you might have made; hence a soft turn of the knob and there you are, safe and sound and no one the wiser.

V

Well, brothers may be a mixed evil; and there may be other relationships awaiting us that, according to the poets at least, are better. We are not so sure. 'Tis better, perhaps, to bear the ills we have than fly to others that we know not of.

E. S., Grade XII.

MOON MAGIC

It is unbearably sultry, this late August night; neither fan nor book can dispel my restlessness and irritability. I decide to go for a walk. Perhaps to Pleasant Lake; it is only a short distance.

The moon, full and radiant, is in the east, lighting the picture with a soft glow that often makes the mediocre appear grotesque.

I pass the cemetery, every stone sharply defined against the deep shadows of cypress trees. On either side of the road willows droop like mourning figures.

Katy-did! Katy-did!

A little farther on, the spicy, moist odors of a summer marsh refresh me like a glass of some cool, fruity beverage. The nasal twang of the swamp dwellers fills the air with a fascinating, throaty music.

Telephone poles, barns, and trees stand out in inky silhouette against the blue-gray sky. The moon is queen, without a doubt. Can it be that Mars is envious? He is nearing the horizon.

Is it my imagination that he is red with chagrin, fury, indignation? A falling star, like the last dying spark of a rocket, lunges toward the earth.

A white building gleams in the moonlight. A marble palace? No, for a silver windmill and white china geese lolling on the dewy grass remind me that it is only a freshly painted farmhouse. A tree shorn of its leaves stands like a black skeleton among a clump of silver birches. A preposterous toad hops in front of me; a startled rabbit darts down the narrow road ahead.

Katy-did! Katy-did!

Again that indescribable marsh smell, this time mingled with the sweet odor of new-cut hay. A heavy mist hovers over the swamp like gray veils. I am nearing the lake. The moon is behind, hence I do not see the expected sight, a rippling, silver path. Even had I been able to view it from another angle, the shimmering effect would have been missing for the lake is still and calm, a black mirror.

A discarded bit of metal gleams in the tall grass. The gravel beach appears softly luminous. Stepping inside a fisherman's boat, I push out upon the peaceful water. It seems almost vandalism to shatter this tranquillity. Even as I do, the image of the moon splits into a thousand glimmering pieces. In an effort to allow it to revert to its original contour, I hold the oars high, diamonds dripping from them.

The moon magic has reached its height. Am I in some silver wonderland? The distant whistle of a train shrills a prosaic negative. The spell is broken. I row slowly back to shore, reflected Mars swaying like a top on the wane.

T. P., Grade IX.

LINCOLN'S PLEDGE TO THE PUEBLO INDIANS

In the southern parts of Colorado, Utah, and New Mexico lie the few remaining villages of the Pueblo Indians. These towns are the last remnants of a great civilization which once stretched from the western part of the United States to the northern regions of Mexico. Always harassed and oppressed, first by the Aztecs, then by the Spaniards, and finally by the Americans, their territories have diminished piece by piece. They have been made the brunt of the greed of other nations, and even as the protégés of the United States, they have been shamefully neglected.

In the matter of caring for these peaceful Indians the United States seems to have acted like a selfish child. It sees something it must have and it sets about to get it. The Indians have good pasture lands and cultivated fields; the Americans will not rest till they seize them. They drive their cattle into the Indian fields, and the Indians must sit by and watch; yet should these Indians in turn let their cattle stray into land that is not theirs, their property is taken away; and they cannot protest.

The Pueblos, to be sure, are paid an annual allowance in the name of the American Government, but it is not so much in a year as the poorest laborer receives in a week. Yet the Indian never complains. He gives freely of his hospitality with what little he possesses and continues under the burden.

When the burden becomes heavier than he can bear, he seeks to lighten it in the best way he knows. Some sixty years ago when the white man grew too overbearing the Indians called a council and decided what to do. They picked a large number of their best men, governors and chiefs, and sent them East to visit the head of the oppressing nation, the Great White Father, Abraham Lincoln. Before him they laid their many grievances and awaited his decision. He gave it in the name of the great American people—a promise that the lands and the rights of the Pueblo Indians should be respected for ever. As proof that the promise would hold good for all time, he gave to each of the Indian representatives an ebony cane tipped with silver on which was engraved the date and the name of Abraham Lincoln.

II

And now again the white man has seen fit to oppress. Forgetting the promise, he endeavors to seize and scatter these people among strangers. This time the Redman is weaker than before; he has no money to send another council so he must pinch and scrape and save every penny. And as that is so little he invokes the aid of the spirits.

The Medicine Man, who knows all things, climbs to the roof of the Council Lodge. He is clothed in Indian fashion, feathered headdress, brilliant beads and scarlet blanket. From the roof of the Lodge he looks over the surrounding country. The whitewashed adobe huts lie glinting in the sun. The withered corn fields are bare and brown. Everything shows their poverty. The Medicine Man raises his arms and calls in a loud voice to the North, to the South, to the East, to the West. He bids the people come and bring their meagre savings, that a Council may be sent again to the Great White Father at Washington.

So the Council of Governors and Chiefs from each Pueblo village have come again to Washington to plead for justice. They await the verdict.

III

Five members of this Council, headed by Tony Romano, paid a visit to our school in order that we might better understand their mission, and because our school is named for Abraham Lincoln. We called a special Assembly to greet them and to welcome them in the name of Lincoln.

They talked to us; they sang to us with the rhythmic accompaniment of their native drums; and then, as a special favor, they danced the dance of gladness for us. Through their interpreter, they told of their happy poverty and of the white man's trespass upon their lands. Then they showed us the ebony canes tipped with silver on which was engraved the name of Abraham Lincoln. These sacred symbols of the covenant made long ago they let us hold in our hands and pass reverently from one to another.

How will America keep the promise made by Abraham Lincoln to these Pueblo Indians that their land shall not be taken from them? To take their lands is to take their lives. Their happiness hangs by a thread.

J. A., Grade XI.

IN DEFENSE OF THE SNAKE

Spring is almost here, and with it will come the snake; and with the snake will come the useless murdering cry, "There's a snake! Get a stick! Kill it! Kill it!" Probably the first sensation of most people on seeing a snake is to get as large a club or rock as they can, just as quickly as they can, and with it beat the poor snake into jelly.

All through history the snake has had a bad name; so fear and hatred of these reptiles seem to have been bred into us for centuries. In fact, the Assyrians, who reverenced the serpent, are the only people in history among whom the serpent was not a symbol of evil. Why this abhorrence should have grown up about the snake is a mystery, but perhaps the reputation of the few poisonous species had something to do with it and is responsible for the heartless murdering of all snakes, good and bad, large or small, that are unlucky enough to fall into the hands of human beings.

The poisonous snakes, however, are few and relatively small in number, while there are many large species of harmless ones which are of great value to agriculture. Take the common milk snake, for example, a pretty little gray snake with a series of bright chestnut saddles down its back, which lives about barns and pastures feeding on rats and mice and slugs and insects which would, if allowed to multiply, become a serious menace to agriculture. Perhaps someone has told you that milk snakes milk cows! Ask that person if he ever saw a milk snake really milk a cow, and a thousand to one he will say that "someone just told him so." Why, a snake could not milk a cow if it wanted to, and even if it could, the cow would have serious objections involving the use of her large splay hoofs, which would crush a snake's back in one stroke.

The milk snake will exhibit an ugly temper if you go to handle it, and will fight fiercely for its freedom, biting and even chewing at one's fingers, but it can do nothing more than draw blood, if it even does that.

Another snake you are likely to meet in the spring is the common garter snake. It lives in fields and eats all kinds of insects, earthworms, toads, and frogs. It is not quite so desirable a neighbor as the milk snake, because it eats more toads and earthworms than it should, but nevertheless it deserves protection and should not be killed on sight. Give any snake, poisonous species included, half a chance and it will get out of your sight as fast as it can.

In this country the poisonous species of snakes are few, consisting of the rattlers, the copperheads, the moccasins, and the coral snakes. Of these the rattler is the least dangerous, because it always gives fair warning whenever you venture too near its couch; and the copperhead is the most dangerous, because it inhabits the woody mountain slopes and berry patches, where it is indistinguishable from the dead leaves, and it strikes with no warning except a low hiss.

The moccasins and the coral snakes are not so dangerous, as they inhabit mainly the dense swamps and morasses of the South where few people dare to venture.

Compared with the harmless species, there are very few poisonous snakes in the United States, and their number is rapidly decreasing. Even to-day the localities where they are found are few and far between. Probably the day is not far removed when all our poisonous snakes will be gone, except in the zoos, and then if we are not careful the beneficial harmless species will also go to join the mammoth and the three-toed horse, and we shall dwell in a snakeless world.

Don't be foolish; give the snake a chance to make good.

Think twice before murdering every snake you see, and you will be amply repaid. Think of how many insects and mice it has eaten and will eat, and you will agree that it is silly to kill it. Join S. P. U. M. S.—Society for the Prevention of the Useless Murdering of Snakes—and help spare the lives of some of our really useful creatures.

W. S., Grade IX.

PEPPERMINT PATTIES

Footsteps.

"Arthur! Arthur! Oh, Arthur! Is that you? That boy is the bane of my existence."

"Hello, Auntie! I'm awfully sorry to be so late."

It was a tall, blue-eyed boy of about twelve who entered and looked very sheepishly at his Aunt Clara.

"Look here, Arthur; I've stood just as much of this as I'm going to. Look at the clock! Half-past ten on Sunday night and you jest gettin' in. You told me you'd be here at eight. Heaven help us! What's your excuse this time—committee meeting? I'll bet it's that Duffy girl again."

"But Auntie, I really couldn't——"

"Get to bed! I'm not going to talk all night."

For some reason Arthur did not feel comfortable with his aunt. He had been with her almost a month—yes, just a month last Wednesday. She had always been cross and disagreeable to him, even though he had tried hard. "Oh, well, I'll fix it," he said.

About eleven-thirty that same night Aunt Clara awoke with a start. Someone was in the kitchen. No—she must have been dreaming; but—listen! There was someone opening the bread tin. The refrigerator door closed with a soft "clickety-click." Aunt Clara couldn't stand this any longer, especially when she remembered that her new teeth were on the kitchen window sill.

II

Slowly down the old stairs she crept. Just as Aunt Clara reached the door the dim light went out. Someone dropped a knife.

Aunt Clara gasped, "Who's that?"

"It's on'y me, Auntie."

"Light the light, you brat," she cried, the absence of teeth giving her voice a strange muffled sound. "I'll teach you to give me such a scare. For lan's sake, hurry up!"

There was a scuffle in the dark. Then a light flared up.

"Now, what on earth have you been up to? Stealing my cake again? Give me that stick!"

No one but poor Arthur can imagine the sight that his Aunt Clara made standing there in her nightcap and gown. Her eyes shot fire and she fairly twitched with anger, as she stood looking down fiercely at her nephew.

"Please, Auntie, I didn't mean any harm. I was on'y——"

"Look at that piece of cake! Don't you 'on'y' me! Say, what on earth are you making those sandwiches for?"

"I was on'y makin' my school lunch, Auntie. I was trying to be as quiet as I could."

"Making your lunch! Why, didn't I give you two dollars for this month's lunches?"

"Yes, Auntie."

"Well, what does this mean?" She pointed dramatically toward the pile of sandwiches.

"Why, I was on'y going to take it along to school with me."

"'On'y!' Hmm! Sounds fishy! . . . Go get me the money."

Arthur very reluctantly ascended the stairs and came back with the same forlorn look on his face.

"Why, I—can't——"

"Hurry! Hurry! Hurry! Tell me! Where is it?"

"Why, I can't find it, Auntie. I must 'a' lost it or somethin'!"

"Laws-a-mercy, boy! What do you mean? Lost two dollars? Oh, what shall I do? You'll drive me mad. I can't give you any more money. For goodness sake, how'd you lose it?"

At this very moment his Aunt Clara stood glaring at him with her stick in hand, a long, able-looking cudgel that seemed to the boy like the handle of a broom. Arthur was so frightened he felt that he would go right through the floor.

"Oh, I was jest foolin' with—uh—George Jenkins over to—uh—his house, and—uh—when I came home—uh—it wasn't—uh—there."

"Oh, you were jest foolin'. Well, I'll bet I'll fool you." She made a wild flourish. "You can't go out one afternoon this week, and you don't get any money! Now get to bed before I lose my self-respect!"

Arthur fled in relief, but he was a sad boy that night. All his plans seemed lost. He was trying to do his best, and it was so hard for a boy of only twelve to do so much. Oh, well, he'd try again.

III

The next morning he ate his breakfast with little relish. Auntie's only words were, "Eat that prune!" and, "Hurry or you'll be late."

School went badly that day; he couldn't seem to get on. Miss Kleming gave him a fine lecture for looking so dead. Everything seemed to be against him. Lunch time came. He ate his few half-buttered sandwiches and thought of the cake he almost had.

Things went on very dully for the next two weeks. It was nearing Christmas and George Jenkins and Mortimer Drake and John Conlon were picking out their presents. Arthur had gone with them on their many trips and had seen all the toys. His eyes watered as he realized that his Christmas would be nothing. He remembered how nice his mother used to make Christmas, even though there was but little. But now that she had gone it all was like a dream.

The two dollars, which his aunt thought had been lost, he had in his possession, carefully tucked away in the top of his closet. What should he do? This money was a fortune to Arthur. It meant so much. It had cost him a great deal more than he had expected, but he had gone half through it now. He would finish it whatever happened.

One morning he came to breakfast a little earlier than usual.

"Aunt Clara, did you know Christmas was going to be here in a few days and I wondered if we were going to have——"

"No! No! No!" she snapped. "I can't afford anything for Christmas. It costs me all my money and patience to keep you, let alone getting presents."

"Oh, Auntie, I didn't mean that. I just wondered if we were going to have Mr. Frazier for dinner. He's so——"

"What? That fossil. I wouldn't think of having him again. Remember how he spilled a tumbler of water on my clean cloth and soaked my new dress! I guess not!"

"Shall I eat now, Auntie?"

"Yes, hurry up and get through. Mrs. Krank is coming over at ten and I've got to get cleaned up. Say, Arthur, did you run off with my scissors? They weren't any good anyhow, but they could cut. Oh, well, get off to school now and—hark!—you be home at four or you'll ketch it!"

"All right, but can't I——"

"Don't 'can't I' me! You be here at four!"

IV

That morning Arthur awoke early. First he looked at the clock, then at the two neatly tied packages on his dresser. He looked at the neat tag, "To Auntie from Arthur." He listened—yes—there was a sound of heavy breathing coming from his aunt's room.

He slipped quietly out of bed, tucking the packages gingerly under his arm. He tiptoed across the hall. Carefully he opened the door and put the presents on her chair. Hardly had he made sure of his retreat when out of the adjoining room came:

"Arthur, go down and fix the fire. Turn down the gas under the prunes and let the cat out. Don't make any noise!"

The cat went out as usual and the gas was turned down, but when it came to fixing the fire it was a longer job. He had counted five shovels of ashes when from upstairs came:

"Well, bless me, what's this? A pair of scissors—and just what I need. The dear boy! And a box of peppermint patties! Just to think, I've wanted some for a whole year and I haven't had any only because I wouldn't buy any from that old crook, Trampler. Well, I am a queer sort."

The coal flew. Arthur had never felt so relieved and happy in all his life. As he looked in at the fire it seemed to say, "Good boy, Arthur. Your troubles are over." A big round tear rolled down his cheek, he hardly knew why, but all his sadness was gone as he thought of the change in store. He turned to put on the last shovel full of coal. As he briskly pushed the shovel into the coal bin there came:

"Oh, Arthur, dear, come up!"

He was lifting out the coal as two or three big chunks dropped to the floor with sufficient noise to cover any further sounds from above.

"Arthur—Oh! Arthur!" she was calling but he was shoveling joyously and did not hear, "What ails that boy!" she cried.

He walked across the floor and flung the coal smashing and crashing into the furnace. The last piece settled just in time for him to catch:

"Arthur, look here, you young imp! Why didn't you answer me? Here I've been waiting and calling for you and no answer. Bless me. I never saw such a boy. Why, if yu'd been mine you never would have acted like this! Come up here, now! Arthur! Do you hear me!"

Arthur, dumbfounded, walked slowly up the stairs.

"Hurry, will you! Come! Come! Come! You're as slow as

—I don't know what. And I bet my last nickel you left that furnace door open!"

As Arthur reached the top of the stairs he looked with amazement at his Aunt Clara. Was she going to rave on forever? "What next?" he thought.

But his Aunt Clara, far from being ferocious, was looking at him with deepest sympathy. She half smiled and almost broke into tears. First she looked at the pair of scissors she had in her hand and then at the box of peppermint patties; then with a rush she had the astonished boy in her arms.

H. H., Grade XI.

THE GENTLE ART OF SLITHE

'Twas brillig and the slithey toves
Did gyre and gimble on the wabe
JABBERWOCKY.

To SLITHE cleverly is one of the fine arts. Every truly sophisticated person must understand slithe; without doubt, it is one of the most important accomplishments that we are privileged to learn at school. Unless we take ourselves very seriously we shall find, sooner or later, that life after all is nothing but slithe—a delightful slithe, to be sure, but nevertheless a slithe.

In the classroom, as well as in life, slithe is a necessity. The very first touch of the need comes when you comprehend that you must know your teacher in every mood and under any condition, no matter how extraordinary. You must know how to treat him when he has a cold, when he is annoyed, when he is eloquent; and you in turn must know when to appear agitated, inspired, stupid, supercilious, severe, ardent, sympathetic, stoical, puzzled, amused, stunned, hysterical, or thoughtful. In other words, your face must be a mirror of your teacher's frame of mind; on every occasion you must know him better than your lesson.

As soon as he asks a question that you are sure you cannot answer, gulp, jump up and down in your chair, grab the person next to you and pray you won't be called upon. This usually works. If it does not—and it has been known to fail—get up and say something, no matter what; change the subject, ask a question, talk about yesterday's lesson; but whatever you do do not titter or swing coyly on one foot or drop into your seat in self-condemnation, for so surely as you cease to slithe you will get a D for the day and the contempt of your fellow slithers.

On the other hand, if by chance you do know what is asked, look horrified and glance around appealingly and you will be picked out at once from the expectant throng. Then rise lifelessly, and commence in a quavering voice, "I don't know, but I think——" Immediately grow persuasive, warm to your subject, exaggerate, annex, augment, enlarge, invent, improvise, expatiate until you have a vital throbbing thing instead of the silly paragraph on page 263. At such a time make the most of your opportunity; appear self-confident, assume the outward suggestion of ease, make them listen, talk convincingly as though you really knew something.

At the end of the period—this is usually a good touch—pick up your books with a smile, go up to the desk and ask some question. "Something," you say, "that's been worrying me for weeks," and all that sort of thing. Argue a little, fidget a little, finally agree—it is always best—and leave the room with an admiring-of-his-intellect "Thank you so much!"

If these tactics be assumed constantly with necessary variations, depending largely on the character of the teacher, the results are always satisfactory. Above all, continually hold before you the uplifting motto, "To look wise is quite as good as understanding, and very much easier."

II

I am myself a very poor slither. But I persevere. The trouble is that right in the middle of the practice I suddenly begin to hate myself like a cow hates persimmons; and then the fuse blows and I may tell that teacher what I think of things. If he is a first-rate sport, and many of them are, he will know that I am not thinking of him at all but am simply using him as a symbol of the self that I would like very much to get behind and punish.

Yet thousands there are who have procured amazing results. Amazing! Use it. Practice, practice, practice! But a word of caution, you Lincolnites: be careful of that professor of biology! Slithe just simply does not work with him. He looks through you calmly—oh, how horridly calmly!—and smiles; and then something gets into the inside of your works, and all the little slithe you have leaves, oozes out, evaporates, goes flooie!

This is the one blemish in the slithe system; unfortunately, there is a professor here and there who also has a system. However, my children, take your losses and, as the song goes, "Slithe! slithe! slithe!"

M. M., Grade XI.

DODGES

I HAVE thumbed over, again and again, all the stock of ideas that are trotted out, thought over, and rejected every time I have to write something.

There is, for instance, the well-worn idea of an editorial for the "Lore," patting the graduating class on the back, and all that sort of thing. A kind of farewell address, don't you know. I think this over for a while, and even go so far, perhaps, as to write down an opening phrase or two; but then I realize what a flaccid, uninteresting thing it would be, compared with the editorials that any number of other persons would write. Tactfully I drop my sad beginning into the waste basket, and bring forth another idea. (That was a good word, "flaccid." Not bad at all. I've been wanting to use it for ever so long.)

This time I resuscitate, perhaps, some grandiose plan for a futuristic story—some vague, Wellsian yarn about the exploration of the planet Venus in the year 2000, or the invention of interstellar transportation. With this kind of thing I spend my time inventing lurid descriptions of the highly advanced machinery to be used, but when I come around to the plot I find that I haven't any; I am equipped with all the minor details but with no place to put them.

These plans discarded, reluctantly it is true, I turn to my long-cherished idea for a satirical essay—it makes no particular difference about what; I just feel that it would be nice to write a satirical essay. I always treasure up this plan against a rainy day, but when the said rainy day comes around I usually find that I can't remember any more of my essay than the title and a few scattered phrases.

Finally, when all these plans have been brought up, discussed, and laid on the table until the next meeting, I find myself face to face again with the universal resort of all last minute theme-writers who are without ideas; this last resort, as you have probably guessed, is the write up of the search for a plot, with a description of the mental agonies undergone during this process. You open by remarking that you have to write a composition for the next day, and that you haven't any ideas, and have spring fever anyhow, and all that. Then you can either embark upon a discussion of plots, similar to this, or else allow your thoughts to wander, and chronicle their wanderings, ending up with some vague remarks about deciding not to write anything, anyway, and to trust to luck that you won't get called on.

I wonder how many times this good old dodge has been used. I know that I have never listened to a set of French compositions in which someone had not delivered himself of a lengthy writing along these lines. In English themes it is not so frequent, for some obscure reason. Still, I have little doubt that everyone in the school has employed this idea at least once, while many hardened sinners never miss an opportunity to embellish their papers with such expository vacua.

Of course, there are all sorts of degrees of excellence in the quality of the production. Some of these plot hunters have managed it so well that they have gotten their effusions published in the school magazine. There is simply no defense for that sort of thing. Writing about nothing at all; that's bad enough. But to print it!

S. R., Grade XI.

WE TAKE OUR PEN IN HAND

THERE are several types of letters, but on the whole they can be divided into two groups: those that you want to answer to get some more like them, and those you have to answer and don't. Really interesting letters are usually taken care of, but, whether you ever answer the first group or not depends on your nature. Answering the second depends on whether you run your family or your family runs you.

The relative letters—from cousins and aunts and forty-second great-aunts—are the ones that make trouble. When you get one you usually groan ungratefully. Of course, it must be answered right away. You want to get it off your mind. But somehow, it gets off your mind without getting into the mail. Then, about two weeks later, another letter comes from the same hand, a hand trembling with righteous wrath. Didn't the lady's ungrateful great-niece get the little note from her loving great-aunt? Hasn't the child—this type of person insists on calling anyone under thirty "child" —been brought up the way she should go? She obviously hasn't. Therefore, she rushes off to fabricate a tactful answer.

After an hour and a quarter of penitence and thought it is finished. The result is gleefully rushed into the waiting envelope. All letters like this are always begun by addressing the envelope. Anyway, that's finished.

You console yourself for the agony by imagining how happy dear old Aunt will be when she gets it. She won't though. She'll groan and shake her head, and deliver a short monologue on the bad writing of the younger generation. Still, if you typewrite it, she'd deliver one on the bad manners and deplorable habit of rushing things of the younger generation.

You sigh with relief and begin on another letter, this time to a person whom you want to impress with your wit and general brilliance. No prudish old maid now, so you can be natural. You are almost super-natural. All the jokes and bright thoughts that couldn't go into the other letter go into this. When it is finished, you are hopelessly proud of it. You slide it into its own envelope. Then you go out and enjoy yourself with a clear conscience.

A few mornings later you get a letter from your great-aunt, who thanks you chillingly for your letter. Your mother gets one from the same source, and you get the benefit of both.

"My dear, *what* did you write to your great-aunt Matilda? She says here, 'Surely the child has an extraordinary sense of humor.' And *did* you call her 'dear angel pie'? *Really*, dear——"

You gasp. You remember how clever you thought that "angel pie" was—in a letter to a girl friend. Apparently, everybody does not appreciate your humor. And what will the person who got Great-aunt Matilda's carefullv written note think!

You sigh. A voice floats in cheerfully—how can people be so happy?

"Want to play tennis?"

"No, thanks. I've got to write a letter."

E. R., Grade X.

TASTING THE EARTH

THE door was flung open and a small child dashed by. She went just slowly enough to reveal a young face. As she skipped, there was something in the lilt of her body that expressed a life filled with happiness and good fortune. Beside her, in the front of a drug store window, stood a jaunty, middle aged man arranging his tie and placing his hat at the correct angle. As he turned with a satisfied grimace the child ceased skipping, looked up at him inquisitively for a moment and went on.

The man was puzzled when she stopped before him, but reacted in no way except that his debonair manner was lost and regained almost simultaneously. A grown-up could have read a hundred stories from the small wrinkles that played about his eyes and mouth; but a child not yet seven, what could she see? Nevertheless she saw and wondered.

Paulette is an ordinary girl—at least that is what she would like to be, only she cannot—which is really the most extraordinary thing about her. Who ever heard of anyone, especially a girl, wishing to be ordinary? Yet it is true. Whoever is exceptional enough for others to notice is truly unfortunate—according to Paulette. Then there are always kind folk coming out of their way to strew roses-without-thorns on your path; and you tread on the pink, velvety, fragrant petals like a goddess.

It is wonderful at first—Paulette laughs at the thought—to feel the soft coolness of the roses beneath your feet, and then to fill your lungs with air freighted with their delicate aroma. But it doesn't last, Paulette knew. By and by the soothing effect disappears, not because it is gone, but because the senses become numb. Some people get used to a thing and like it; so they never change.

Paulette was different. Oh, she knew too well that she was different. If only she could be sure no one was watching, she would dig into the rose petals with her big toe and find what was below. She was certain it was the earth. And how she ached to taste it!

II

It was quite long ago that Paulette's had been a well-to-do family, so she had no memory of it. She could only remember the time her mother left the big house with her. They had come to where they were living now, leaving all the pretty things behind. Her father seldom came home, but Paulette cared nothing for that. Had not someone told her it was his fault everything unfortunate had happened? So when Paulette was very young she realized she had no father. Consequently, her mother became a remarkable woman, and of course Paulette did not really mind not having a dad; he would have seemed like an unnecessary luxury.

III

Until Paulette was eight nothing unusual happened. She went to a public school where the routine was the same every day. She did as the others did, but even here her individuality was not hidden.

It was called individuality because no one knew what it was. One of her teachers decided to discover for herself. She knew of a wealthy woman who was interested in poor but talented children and she brought Paulette to see her in a strange place.

A lovely lady with dark intelligent eyes, she spoke in a well modulated tone, as though she were thinking rapidly and hardly saying what she thought.

"I'm sure Paulette is an interesting little girl," she said to the teacher while she turned her head and smiled vaguely at the serious face of the child, who was scrutinizing her knowingly; "but, really, I am—er—rather doubtful as to whether her joining the group just at present would be of any real value to her. You understand we have very many children so far advanced—er—I don't know if it's the right thing for her—oh—really, I'm afraid I—ah——"

Here Paulette left the side of her teacher and strolled towards the window to examine some forlorn looking blossoms in an orange china bowl.

"Perhaps next fall, if you come again," the lady paused uncomfortably. The shadow of Paulette's figure on the floor annoyed her. If the sun wasn't at that particular angle—— She was startled by the graceful turn of Paulette's body which brought them face to face.

"Of course, I shall write and let you know. You'll come then, er—won't you, dear?"

There was a desperate silence while Paulette regarded her comprehendingly. She smiled forgiveness to the lady and turned toward the orange bowl on the window sill.

"You don't know how to take care of flowers, do you?" said Paulette soberly. "Those need more water and sunshine."

Paulette and her teacher left the mystified lady after an embarrassing farewell. They went out a different way, down an empty, dimly lighted stairway. Paulette could barely see. She felt her way along the hall when suddenly a bright band of footlights blinded her. Her hands unconsciously went up to her face to protect her eyes. In a little while she became accustomed to the light that filtered through her fingers and let her hands drop limply to her sides.

A girl walked past Paulette. She had on a black knitted garment that covered her whole body except the face. On the top of her head were two protruding things that amazed Paulette. On her arm she carried a long black curious object.

"My tail has fallen off. Who'll pin it on again?" she shouted. Immediately, Paulette knew she was supposed to be an animal and that the extensions on her head were ears. The procession of costumed children delighted Paulette, but she could not understand why they all went in the same direction. While she stood figuring this out, the girl in black came by her again.

"She's a pussy-cat," the teacher explained. Paulette didn't need the explanation. She was wondering why it was so easy to tell what they all were now. Painted faces! That was it. They had gone to have their faces changed.

A deep voice interrupted Paulette's thinking by announcing that all but those rehearsing had to leave the stage. This was a small theater and all these children were going to practice. There were very few spectators, mostly people who looked like mothers. Paulette was anxiously waiting to see the funny make-believe pussy-cat whose tail was held in place by a huge shiny safety pin.

It was a real cat Paulette saw creeping about the stage.The hazy blue light transformed the skinny girl's knitted costume into real fur, the music made the tail wag. Paulette was in a trance until she felt someone grasp her hand and take her away.

Paulette did not sleep well that night. Twice she awoke with a queer craving to express herself behind those enchanted lights. The lovely lady must have slept badly, too, for the next day she brought Paulette into a new world, the realm of the theater. This was the place for Paulette, no need to tell her; she knew she had been part of it long before she came.

IV

Faithfully year in and year out Paulette travelled way down town to the little theater where the people could find themselves. Her dancing grew and developed as did Paulette. The once reluctant lady became an enthusiastic sponsor to all of Paulette's wishes and gave her a fine education in a school that neglected neither the practical nor the artistic side of life.

When Paulette was fourteen, there were three heavenly weeks in her life, weeks filled with practice for the small Japanese pantomime she was going to give in a semi-professional performance. For six years, nearly half of her life, she had been waiting for a chance like this.

The few hours before her "call" to go on the stage were full of fascination. The odors of cold cream, rouge and powder were blended into one—a drug that enslaves with one breath. The big squares of ugly cheese cloth were bewitched, they felt so comforting against her cheeks. The white Japanese "tabies" were magically familiar.

Paulette was on the stage. The curtain opened and she took a deep draught of a new untainted atmosphere. Everywhere it was dark. The stage was the only bright place, as if a bit of sunshine had broken through the night. As she took the first few slow steps, something strange reverberated in her being. She was not acting—she was living; for the first time! Moving about in a gorgeous silken kimono! Making exquisite pictures against the tall gilt screens! All done in rhythm to the perfect living stillness that comes from a responding audience!

A bewildered silence. Paulette listened eagerly. It came! Success! It was rampant in the storm of applause! She was vibrating in the air as the caressing murmur of voices came through the curtain. The step of those who rushed back stage to see her was springy. The handclasps were strong and sincere. Lighted-up faces, excited glances! Her audience believed in her. That was success!

Curtain after curtain. The vision vanished. Paulette was struggling fiercely to keep off the heavy iron chains that slowly wound themselves about her. Fastened! Bound securely! Why couldn't she give them more of herself, those unseen, starving people in the dense black beyond the footlights. Tomorrow night—!

There was no tomorrow. A letter explained that very aptly:

"—and this very wonderful and talented Japanese lady who is returning to Japan shortly will dance in your place. This is the only chance she has to show her marvelous work. As you are the youngest, we thought the simplest, most satisfactory arrangement would be to let her take your place.

"Hoping you'll accept these two tickets and bring your mother to see Madame Muraki——"

What were they trying to tell her? No matter; she must listen to them; they knew. The suggestion of failure between the lines couldn't be possible. The enthusiasm of the audience, was that counterfeit? Unbelievable! Was it all false glory that had sent her blood racing madly through her veins?

Paulette did not know that the letter was not meant to tell any more than it said. They did not know her, never contemplated how Paulette would interpret the short message.

Why hadn't they told her last night instead of giving her flowers? Perhaps the flowers were supposed to make it easier. They didn't. They were beautiful last night, but as Paulette looked at them now, she thought she had never seen such ugly blossoms, nor inhaled such a pungent perfume.

V

Queer people! Interested in children . . . yes, smiling, lovely, sympathetic . . . kindly crushing their young spirits with blundering sweetness.

Trodding a path of roses, Paulette had found a thorn. Plain roses, after all. The thorns were buried under the thick carpet of rose petals. Paulette knew the carpet had thinned; she was nearer the earth.

She lifted her eyes from the letter. They fell on the reflection of her face in the mirror. She saw—what was it she saw? . . . The stranger in front of the drug store window. The gaily colored tie flying, fluttering to the wind. The hat tipped so that it made him look younger—a carefree man of the world, tasting the earth. She remembered him distinctly. . . . Paulette looked at herself in the mirror again; that was his face—bitter wisdom without remorse.

L. K., Grade XI.

SHIPS, TOWERS, DOMES

MANY people had told me that the best way to find out what a city is really like is to watch it wake up; I resolved, therefore, as soon as I arrived in Paris, to leave my hotel at the sensible hour of five in the morning. So one day I arose early and started out, much to the surprise of the *concierge*. "These American girls!" she seemed to say.

I traversed many dark streets until I was quite lost. It was still like night, the cool, damp air making me almost wish for my coat. A slight mist hung over the city playing hide and seek with the morning stars.

Absorbed in thought I was suddenly awakened as if from a dream by a cart rumbling along the street. I looked up and noticed one of those heavy vegetable wagons from the outskirts of the town. I hurried on and followed it and soon found myself in the midst of a large busy square. Men and women were hurrying all about and emptying other carts similar to the one that had passed me. These people were talking in subdued voices while preparing booths to sell their goods at market. In the middle of the square ran a wide street, and on either side was a long high building full of booths. It was built with a kind of black iron and looked something like a barn.

Noticing that the market women were looking at me as curiously as I was looking at them, I decided not to disturb them and turned into another street. This soon led me to the banks of the Seine; I hurried to the nearest bridge and then stood looking into the muggy gray water flowing beneath me.

II

For a long while I watched the river running at its own sweet will; gradually the color of the water changed; it seemed to brighten; then I realized it was the reflection of the sky which was losing its gray tinge and was becoming white.

Soon an old fisherman joined me on the bridge quietly, awaiting the fish that never came. He put a pipe in his mouth, then looked at me; his eyes smiled and seemed to say, "I understand you; the only reason I hold this line is an excuse to watch my beloved city." Then we resumed our quiet vigil.

The first thing to disturb us was a tug which came puffing along the river, pulling its charge of barges. A woman on the houseboat was scolding her husband, but just as she passed below us she shouted to my fisher friend, "*Bonne chance, mon vieux*," then muttering something about *café au lait*, was gone.

Everything was quiet again except for the honk-konk of an early taxi in the distance. I dropped into a reverie which however did not last long, for the chimes of a nearby church told me the hour of six. Little by little a sort of buzz seemed to begin, stirring and rustling.

III

I bid good-morning to the fisherman and started for the hotel. In each narrow street the shutters were being opened with a bang which seemed to echo everywhere.

Shops were opening; the busy milkmaid was passing hurriedly. A man with chickweed in a basket came along shouting, "*Pour les petits oiseaux*." Then a woman riding in a donkey cart with old rags set up a cry of, "*Chiffon, ferraille à vendre*," with an unearthly intonation.

I began to have an empty feeling, so I entered the nearest *boulangerie*. The *boulangère* was chattering gaily to a little *bonne* dressed in a large blue apron and a black crocheted shawl with a pair of carpet slippers. She was filling a basket on her arm with fresh bread, meanwhile discussing whether *Monsieur voulait des petits pains ou des brioches*.

I bought one of those long French rolls and stuck it under my arm the way I had seen the cooks do while marketing.

IV

As I entered the hotel the *concierge* looked hard at me and my bread; then, with rather an amused expression, she gave me the key to my room.

V. W., Grade IX.

AN ADVANCE VIEW

(*The Theater Guild has announced Shaw's* Cæsar and Cleopatra *for presentation next year. Here is a reader's view of the play, given in advance, with all the flavor of the glee-provoking stage directions, notes, and prefaces, which the mere auditor in the theater must miss.*—EDITOR.)

IN THE midst of quarreling Egyptians with conflicting opinions as to the absolute certainty of the pending arrival of the dreaded Roman; among cowardly pessimists and no less cowardly but stupid optimists, both of them egoists and egotists like their lovely, selfish queen; and, finally, in the mysterious atmosphere of Old Egypt, her pyramids, temples, and palaces, the play is skilfully staged. While the unseen Father Nile watches the Egyptian river, so beneficent and so treacherous as it majestically flows down from the very heart of untamed Africa; while the sacred river kindly overflows its banks and gently recedes; while wild and obstinate Nubians are ruthlessly thrown to the ravenous crocodiles forever lurking in its deep recesses, this shrewd drama proceeds, not with the grandiose deliberation of the mighty Nile, but with fitful and amazing steps. Apparent from the first page is the horrible sunny aspect of cruel, heartless Egypt, ruled by a most ingenious tormentor, established on an unsteady throne built out of fabulous wealth and founded on sand, sand which has been and is slowly burying all this sinister period of unrest, torture, and deception.

II

Ironical, delighting in puzzling others by his weird tactics, a competent, experienced man is Cæsar; infinitely wiser than woman's frail though astute mind, and having everything in his favor but youth and youth's physical attractiveness. Unmoved by war, woman, or wine, he cannot help but win, for he is just a little cooler than the coolest, and just a little more serene than anyone. He is the kind of man who amidst confusion and turmoil can think always right the first time; no action vital to a point at issue, no matter how slight, can escape him, in which particular the fair sex, as represented here by the youthful Cleopatra, is all too often weak. People think him clement but he is only saving himself trouble; he knows also when to be severe as in Gaul, and when to repudiate even his own severity, as witness this scene from Act II:

POTHINUS. Bear witness, Lucius Septimus. Cæsar came hither in pursuit of his foe. Did we shelter his foe?

LUCIUS. As Pompey's foot touched the Egyptian shore, his head fell by the stroke of my sword.

THEODOTUS (*with viperish relish*). Under the eyes of his wife and child! Remember that, Cæsar! They saw it from the ship he had just left. We have given you a full and sweet measure of vengeance.

CÆSAR (*with horror*). Vengeance!

POTHINUS. Our first gift to you, as your galley came into the roadstead, was the head of your rival for the empire of the world. Bear witness, Lucius Septimus. Is it not so?

LUCIUS. It is so. With this hand, that slew Pompey, I placed his head at the feet of Cæsar.

CÆSAR. Murderer! . . .

THEODOTUS (*flatteringly*). The deed was not yours, Cæsar, but ours—nay, mine; for it was done by my counsel. Thanks to us you keep your reputation for clemency, and have your vengeance too.

CÆSAR. Vengeance! Vengeance!! Oh, if I could stoop to vengeance, what would I not exact from you as the price of this murdered man's blood. (*They shrink back, appalled and disconcerted.*) . . . Am I Julius Cæsar, or am I a wolf, that you fling to me the grey head of the old soldier, the laurelled conqueror, the mighty Roman, treacherously struck down by this callous ruffian, and then claim my gratitude for it! (*To Lucius Septimus*) Begone; you fill me with horror.

LUCIUS (*cold and undaunted*). Pshaw! You have seen severed heads before, Cæsar, and severed right hands too, I think; some thousands of them, in Gaul, after you vanquished Vercingetorix. Did you spare him, with all your clemency? Was that vengeance?

CÆSAR. No, by the gods! would that it had been! Vengeance at least is human. No, I say; those severed right hands, and the brave Vercingetorix basely strangled in a vault beneath the Capitol, were (*with shuddering satire*) a wise severity, a necessary protection to the commonwealth, a duty of statesmanship—follies and fictions ten times bloodier than honest vengeance! What a fool I was then! To think that men's lives should be at the mercy of such fools! (*Humbly*) Lucius Septimus, pardon me: why should the slayer of Vercingetorix rebuke the slayer of Pompey? You are free to go with the rest. Or stav if you will: I will find a place for you in my service.

Not yet serpentine, not yet unafraid, or experienced, but deceitful and hardened to a cruelty which even abashed the great Cæsar, Cleopatra was the typical spoiled, pampered child, almost a flapper. Of all selfish Egyptians she looked out for number one the most, and when she pretended to adore Cæsar, she did it not for Egypt's sake but because she wanted a certain Roman, fleet of foot and handsome, Marc Anthony. To be sure, she languished for and desired this Roman of all Romans above earthly things, but she wanted him for herself alone. She curses herself because she is too juvenile and wishes to be an adult in order to have the dominant personality and amazing strategy of a Cæsar. She admires her astounding beauty like a child and is always foolishly confident that everything will eventually turn out right, for her.

That hawk woman, with the marvelously brilliant ivory teeth, perfect composure, and militaristic bearing, the queen's chief nurse, Ftatateeta, causes severe trouble before the play ends. A terrible creature and powerful; she would be a fit mate for the appalling Cæsar himself, for she strikes me as resembling that worthy as much as any woman truly could.

A politician from head to foot, impetuous, unscrupulous, but no match for the indomitable spirit of the superhuman Cæsar, Pothinus, the chief counsellor of Egypt, is a delightful study of inefficient efficiency. Easily aroused by trifles he cannot keep his head, and although he may have been dependable in times of peace, he is simply carried away in time of panic.

Big, burly Rufio, Cæsar's plebeian bodyguard, makes me think of a rough, loyal, slow-thinking bulldog; conventional and conservative, but useful to do the normal labor or oversee it. The artistic soul of Cæsar must have found relief in Rufio's company; Cæsar, who had always to deal with hardened, clever politicians, could delight in his servant's blunt simplicity. Rufio was purely an instinctive person; should someone strike him, his instinct had no deterrent, like reason, to prevent him from striking back twice as hard. He is the last one to see the point to Cæsar's exotic manœuvres, although Cæsar is very patient in explaining everything to him. Soldiers would appreciate and sympathize with Rufio.

Ptolemy is the ten-year-old brother and husband of Cleopatra, a relationship somewhat startling even to modern advanced views. His sister-wife hates him as cordially as he loathes her, but, being a small child, he quite naturally fears her. Like his more celebrated sister and spouse, he is brought up in extravagant luxury; death as a spectacle for his entertainment, by a hot oil dip applied to his vassels, disturbs him not in the least. Here is a sample of their fraternal interest in each other:

BRITANNUS. You are Cæsar's prisoners, all of you.

CÆSAR (*benevolently*). Oh, no, no, no. By no means. Cæsar's guests, gentlemen.

CLEOPATRA. Won't you cut their heads off?

CÆSAR. What! Cut off your brother's head?

CLEOPATRA. Why not? He would cut off mine, if he got the chance. Wouldn't you, Ptolemy?

PTOLEMY (*pale and obstinate*). I would. I will, too, when I grow up.

(*Cleopatra is rent by a struggle between her newly-acquired dignity as a queen, and a strong impulse to put out her tongue at him. . . .*)

III

The plot, which is very simple and effective, is further enhanced by the most amusing and accurate stage directions, the which make the play realistic and vividly portray certain incidents and situations. For the reader of the play this descriptive comment on character and action is beyond price. Shaw's directions here might, at first glance, seem impossibly far-fetched, but, on second thought, they are seen to be right to the point. Here are a few of the most amusing samples:

Rufio bites his beard, too angry to speak. Cæsar sits as comfortably as if he were at breakfast, and the cat were clamoring for a piece of Finnan-Haddie. (Act II.)

Cæsar kisses her on the forehead. Cleopatra is much affected and begins to sniff. He embarks. (Act V.)

The palace, an old, low, Syrian building of whitened mud, is not so ugly as Buckingham Palace; and the officers in the courtyard are more highly civilized than modern English officers: for example, they do not dig up the corpses of their dead enemies and mutilate them, as we dug up Cromwell and the Mahdi. (Act I.)

Ptolemy, the King, looks much older than an English boy of ten; but he has the childish air, the habit of being in leading strings, the mixture of impotence and petulance, the appearance of being excessively washed, combed and dressed by other hands, which is exhibited by court-bred princes of all ages. (Act II.)

Cleopatra's ladies are all young, the most conspicuous being Charmian and Ira, her favorites. Charmian is a hatchet faced, terra cotta colored little goblin, swift in her movements, and neatly finished at the hands and feet. Iras is a plump, good-natured creature, rather fatuous with a profusion of red hair, and a tendency to giggle on the slightest provocation. (Act IV.)

If Shakespeare had written his directions so exactly, how much more comprehensive and actual his plays would be! Whereas the most descriptive remarks in his dramas are terms like "aside," "faints," "they draw," "exit" and the like, which do not aid actively in making the action more alive to the layman. The great English dramatist is often criticized because his action or his characters do not seem pertinent to our age or to our so-called modern ways of thinking, but Shaw is careful to make his work as true to life as possible.

IV

Rollicking and clever in spots, the dialogue is often colloquial, while at other times it is almost melodramatic, but always in an understandable, modern manner. What a relief at times from the Shakespearean style! No "Have at thee, ribald!" in this humorous writing! The conversation is witty and direct, but there are moments that arrest the eye, real gems as to truth and philosophy. Rufio speaks relatively little, but what he says and how he modulates it renders him easy to picture at every instant. The same is true of the other minor characters, of Ftatateeta, the queen's chief nurse, of the unfortunate Pothinus, even of the pathetic little king.

Some may think that Shaw is too profound for high school pupils, but this piece of prose must be an exception, for although there is certainly more in it than I could fathom, the great bulk of it I could see with facility. *Macbeth* is deep compared to *Cæsar and Cleopatra;* no one would think of leaving it out of the compulsory school studies; yet I could see the point of the Shaw play, and at every point, while I viewed *Macbeth* as through smoked glass.

A. B., Grade X.

THE PURSUIT OF ZERO

A simple child . . .
What should it know of math?

EVERY spring a little group of serious thinkers gets busy on the answer to Mr. Wordsworth's innocent question. (See above.) The answer to that one is comparatively easy. The surprises come in the replies to its little brother, What *does* it know of math? That is, alas, a different story, a very different story, very, very different, very, very, very . . . we must stop this; hysterical excitement is bad for the complexion.

Of course, some minds are made for math. There are a few people, terrible as it may seem, who find happiness in hypotenuses, bliss in bisected angles, recreation in radii, play in polynomials, and math in everything. In their heaven all the clouds will be isosceles triangles, or, better still, fourth dimensions. But at least they are easy to entertain. Their idea of a hot time is hauling out all last year's pencil stubs and the dear old algebra and digging in. You can keep any mathematical genius happy and contented for hours at a time by just letting him solve every other equation in the book. It is a perfectly harmless amusement. Anyone who finds it fascinating may have all his evenings nicely provided for by just applying to us. We will be charmed to donate all our spare problems to the cause. And practically all the problems that find their way to us are spare, very, very spare. On Saturday and Friday nights, if he has been a good little mathematician, we will let him add up all the numbers in the telephone book and find their average. But that would only be for a special treat.

Most people, however, have other ideas of happiness. For them, chasing the reluctant x across the planes has absolutely no attraction. The lure of the unknown, much advertised in novels, does not apply to math. They have originated a system of their own for solving erratic equations. This is a beautiful idea, except that these systems so seldom work. The same rule applies to the author of the system. Some, when they see an equation, howl, give three long moans, and retire from the room in a dead faint. This is called elimination by derision—of the other, brighter minds. The chief drawback to it is that visitors, passing the torture chamber during the beginning of the program, are likely to imagine that the sounds of sweet music are either the Glee Club's simple vocal test or a practical demonstration by the junior class in dentistry. In either case, it speeds the parting guest.

Math should be made more interesting. That is the solution of the difficulty of making it linger in the infant mind. What is it that remains longest in the juvenile memory? Answer, movies, exciting fiction, and food. There are obvious drawbacks to demonstrating math by food, though we think it might be done, perhaps, by giving a tea at which the guest would be requested to find out by algebraic rules just why the home-made cake has that funny taste.

II

As to the movies, dramatizing algebra should be very easy. Take, for example, the age-old competition between A, B, and C. C is really only a sort of lame duck, a weak sister. He is always the one that takes longest at the before-breakfast ditch-digging competitions. He can only walk seven and two fifths miles per hour, whereas A and B, the stalwart twins, stride along manfully at seven and three fifths, thereby hopelessly tangling up the equation. No wonder the heart of Zero, the beautiful heroine, is torn between them! No wonder their rivalry is keen and bitter! They are both, being twins, the handsomest man Zero has ever seen. Watch them now, as they run 153 yards around the pasture. Zero's little heart is beating with excitement, her eyes are starry with excitement. There is a fine chance for a close-up here, while the orchestra plays *Ach du Lieber Augustine*, or *Old Dog Tray* or anything else appropriate.

Zero is so excited that she fails to see her danger. A terrible fate menaces her! Unseen by the happy party

a villain steals	up to her and is about to	snatch
a mad dog rushes		bite
an express-train dashes		run over
a bull, infuriated by her pink gingham, roars		gore her
		to death

when A and B simultaneously perceive her peril. Both dash to the rescue. A is first. But B is determined to be a hero in spite of him. He is also determined to elope with Zero. There is only one course open to him.

He pushes A in to the path of the	villain
	dog
	train
	bull

and snatches up the fair Zero, while the orchestra plays *The End of a Perfect A.* This is called elimination by subtraction.

III

THE PASSIONATE MATHEMATICIAN TAKES TO POETRY

Does A beat B?
Does B beat A?
I do not know;
I cannot say.

If M had worked ten hours a day
Would N have struck for how much pay?

If X had speeded up a bit,
If Y had fallen in a fit,
If Z had started acting strange,
Then how would the equation change?

IV

The detective story motive could be used. The diamonds are stolen—the famous diamonds of the family. This is called elimination by abstraction. A shadowy figure is seen lurking in the bushes. The butler fires. The figure drops to the ground with an unearthly cry. This is called eliminating the unknown.

The historical idea might be successful. Something certainly ought to be done about the prevailing impression that Euclid was a mean, cold, callous, brutal, designing, cruel villain, whose life aim was to darken the lives of future generations. He was probably only a nice old man who wanted to amuse the children. He certainly succeeded. Plane living and high thinking was his motto, and the thinking was certainly high—future generations have been paying for it ever since. Perhaps he was revenging himself on the younger generations, being unable to write unpleasant novels.

Well, I must stop, I have a rendezvous with math.

E. R., Grade XI.

MacLANE

Whenever I think of New England I always recall a character who, although apparently ordinary, has many peculiarities which make him a man of interest to me. His present home is in an isolated valley, where a handful of farmers, some weazened and pinched in appearance, others stalwart and robust, make a scant but sufficient living from the stony earth.

The man I am speaking of is a strong, sturdy fellow, a blacksmith by former trade. He is the only one in the surrounding country who has not lived all his life on the homestead where his ancestors lived theirs. As his name, Frederick MacLane, indicates, he is not a New Englander. He and his forefathers were distinctly Scotch.

He cuts a lonely figure in these hills, for he is not desired by the community. Here newcomers are not welcome. It was for this reason that before anyone had ever seen him, there were numberless false rumors about him, relating to untrue characteristics that were merely the products of many idle brains.

And now that he is settled he will not remain long. He will probably cut off the lumber, improve a small patch of soil, and move on. The others in the valley wonder at this rapid moving and changing, for they cannot understand it. But he is of the newer generation and in order to satisfy his restless spirit he must wander still further on.

He is always planning for the future, but he is never quite prepared for action at the present. He will always be ready to take in seven loads of hay tomorrow, but somehow he is not quite able to get in any today. After all, that is not a strange peculiarity, for it is more pleasant for anyone to "put off till tomorrow," as the saying goes.

II

His entire farm has a degraded aspect, a general sloppy and disorderly appearance. No matter at what season of the year, there may always be found, left scattered around in an untidy style, innumerable worn-out rakes, mowing machines and other implements of the sort. To this is added a pile of rotten lumber full of rusty spikes. There are countless valuable wagons around the yard, gone to ruin because of neglect and exposure. Upon questioning about this wanton waste, he will invariably reply that next summer he is going to build a wagon shed. However, next summer comes and passes with no result.

Practically everyone has a hobby; some are worthy and some are rather undesirable. Mr. MacLane has one also. It is that of trading, or, as is more generally termed by those of the country-side, "swapping." He trades mostly with animals and from many years of handling stock he has become very careless with his beasts.

It is that characteristic that I dislike the most; no man, no matter how many dumb brutes he has to care for, has a right to neglect and mistreat them. His stables, which should by all means be cleaned daily, are often left uncared for for a week. He excuses himself; with a shrug of his shoulders, by relating the terrible amount of work that he has been doing lately. When the source of this toil is investigated it proves to be only more "swapping" trips that he has been on.

He considers that the care that an animal is worthy of is determined by its money value. As MacLane is well known for his swapping "sight unseen," as he terms it, he many times brings home a horse that is barely able to hold the weight of the harness. It is this type of beast, needing the most care, which he disregards.

It is this same trading that brings him the run-down and useless farm implements that go to ruin around his farm.

II

But he is not entirely the shiftless, idle man that I have made him out to be. He has a wife who continually tries to set him on his feet. Although lacking in schooling, she is a hard working, straightforward woman. The farm does not in reality belong to Mr. LacLane, but to his wife. It was not the one they are on now, however, for MacLane has moved several times since then.

He realizes what his wife has done for him and he, in turn, does the best that he is capable of for her. And well she deserves any help she can get, for she is a frail woman with entirely more work than she has energy to perform. Many is the time that she comes out on the hayfield and helps take in the hay which her husband, "due to other important duties," as he expresses it, has not taken care of.

IV

There are three little children, two girls and a boy, and it is when he is with his wife and his children that the bright side of MacLane's character presents itself. The children, all under six years of age, are entirely different from their parents. They are not lazy and slow, as is their father, nor pale and thin like their mother. They are shiny, red-cheeked, smiling youngsters, perfect pictures of happiness and contentment. It is they who cheer their parents, who, tired and nervous after a hard day's toil, need composure and rest.

It is a touching scene to witness this rough farmer coming in from the out of doors (where he has been lashing his horses and shouting and gesticulating to make the tired brutes exert more strength) and sit down at the table and fondle his children as gently as a mother. After their supper he gets down on the floor and plays blocks, or some other childish game with them.

He feels deeply and passionately for his young ones. Once when a mother hen flew at his daughter he leaped at it and, in a fit of temper, slaughtered it on the spot.

A cruel and savage man in many ways, but he has a tender, gentle spirit which more than partly makes up for it.

S. V., Grade IX.

THE SANTO DOMINGO CORN DANCE

The Corn Dance of Santo Domingo, as is true of all other dances of the Pueblo Indians, has a very deep religious significance. This dance is a form of prayer for rain. In the dry desert land of New Mexico and Arizona, where water is scarce, the Indians depend very largely on rain for their crops. Water is carefully preserved in this country, and in most of their gardens little banks are built around the plants to hold the water.

When the Catholic friars were trying to convert the Indians to the Christian faith they found that the Pueblo Indians believed too firmly in their pagan religion to be easily moved from it. The priests, therefore, made a compromise and permitted the Indians to continue believing as they had but insisted on their worshipping the Christian martyrs as well. For this reason the Corn Dance is an odd mixture of two religions, but it is believed that with the majority of the Indians the pagan part of the ceremony is the more sincere.

II

In the morning of the day of the dance, August fourth, a service is held in the little missionary church of the pueblo, at which time all the marriage and baptismal ceremonies of the year are performed. Then the figure of Saint Dominick, their patron saint, is carried all around the town and put, finally, in a little arbor, conveniently placed so that the good Catholic father may watch the pagan dance. Then the "Koshari," decorated to represent the spirits of the dead, come out of the "kivas" and run to the four corners of the earth to commune with the spirits of their ancestors, whence they return almost immediately with a message proclaiming that they should continue their ancient ceremonies.

The Koshari are the clowns of the dance—introduced, I suppose, to take the too ghostly atmosphere from the spirits of the dead—and, being spirits, they are supposed to be invisible. While the Koshari are running around the plaza, shouting and playing pranks, the dancers appear; all afternoon they dance, until sunset, when the Summer People and the Winter People come together for the climax.

III

We arrived early enough to see the figure of Saint Dominick carried around the town and placed in its arbor covered with green boughs. We obtained places on a house top very near this arbor with the kiva of the summer people behind it.

The kiva of the Indian serves the same purpose as the church to the white man; they are large round structures about six feet high and twenty-five feet in diameter; steps lead up to the top, from which a long ladder descends down under the earth. Very few white men have ever been allowed to enter a kiva. In Santo Domingo there are two, one for the Summer People, and one for the Winter People, as they call them.

There were probably three or four hundred spectators of this dance—but it was not given for their benefit; the appeal was solely to the gods to send down rain to moisten the crops.

After a wait of half an hour or so the Koshari of the Summer People came out of their kiva. Their bodies were painted to represent skeletons, white with black dots. Dry corn husks were on their heads and their long hair was drawn up tightly and painted white like a skull. Rattling at every step, the hoofs of deer hung around their waists.

Immediately, they gathered together outside, as though to receive orders from a leader, and then dispersed to "the four corners of the earth" and returning, still in a close group, they shouted to the people the orders of their ancestors to continue their ancient ceremonies. Then they went from house to house to bestow their blessings on every home, cracking jokes in their loudest voices as they went. Unfortunately, I could not understand the language but, by their wide gesticulations, and the responses of the Indian spectators, one could easily see that they were not serious.

After the Winter Koshari had come out and had gone through the same thing, the Summer People filed out of their kiva. There must have been a hundred dancers from each kiva and I could not understand how so many people could come from under the ground.

Every man had a sash around his waist, fastened with a long wide belt with a dozen strings from each end which nearly reached the ground. A fox pelt hung from his back. Bells were fastened around his knees—this was the only modern part of the ceremonial dress—and a skunk's fur was looped around each moccasin. The fur was symbolic of tramping evil under foot, since, naturally enough, the skunk represented all that was evil. A bunch of feathers, called a "prayer plume," was on each head. Almost every man had long hair which hung to his waist. Pine branches were fastened on the shoulders, and others held in the left hand; in the right hand each man had a rattle. Every few minutes, at a certain point in the dance, all the men shook the rattles vigorously to represent falling rain.

The women were dressed in black robes, which reached below the knees, and were fastened over one shoulder and bound at the waist with a red sash. Their feet were bare. Tall boards, a foot long, were fastened upright on the head; these were carved with attractive designs, most of them representing the "steps to heaven."

The dancers came out of the kiva and walked away. We had been waiting about fifteen minutes when, suddenly, we heard the beating of a drum and the chanting of men's voices at the other end of the plaza. We quickly clambered up the ladder to our housetop, for, as I said before, the corn dance is not given for the benefit of the spectators.

On one side was a choir of perhaps fifty old men led by a drummer. Loudly and vigorously they sang a weird chant. The sound of the drummer was very monotonous; at times he put in a couple of slow beats, but, although we could not detect any regularity to it, the dancers kept exactly with him.

On the left side of the plaza the dancers were lined up in two rows, each man being followed by a woman. They were led by a Koshari and the rain priest carrying the tall purification rod; it had a plume of gorgeous red feathers at the top with streamers of eagle feathers down the sides.

The men danced vigorously with a sort of hop and a shake of the knees on every other beat. The women danced with less vigor, hardly lifting their feet from the ground.

The Koshari danced in and out among the others, but the dancers took no notice of them, since they were supposed to be invisible. At times, the Koshari would wave their arms in pantomime of falling rain and prosperous crops. Sometimes the Koshari would become very mischievous. At one time. I remember, a Koshari captured a live chicken from someone's house and ran all over the plaza with it, the feathers flying in all directions in its struggle for freedom.

The whole group moved slowly up toward the other end of the plaza as they danced. Then, without warning, they suddenly stopped of one accord and formed two lines, one on each side of the plaza. Here they went through different "figures," passing to opposite sides and so forth. During this part of the dance the rain priest waved the purification rod over the dancers to represent falling rain.

When the Summer People had finished, they filed off to their kiva and the Winter People came out to go through the same thing. Then the Summer People took it up again and so forth for the whole afternoon.

IV

At about five o'clock a sand storm came up; we endured it for about forty minutes, but, thinking it probably would not die down for a long while, we reluctantly left. Not so with the dancers, however. They kept dancing through the whole storm not flinching a bit. There were times when the sand in the air was so thick that we could not see the dancers, although they were hardly twenty feet away, but we could still hear their rattles, the monotonous drum, and the wailing chant of the choir of undaunted old men.

W. C., Grade X.

YOU

A MONOLOGUE

(*A beautiful young girl enters between the drawn curtains with unutterable poise. There can be no doubt that she has used a deal of powder and paint, but they become her admirably, and she wears them like a medal. She is like an old fluted column, which has been festooned with yielding laces for some modern festival, and which, half bewildered, half saddened by the tinsel that buoys around it, invests the alien costume with an unnatural, startling grace. She recites the prologue in an unruffled voice, and all the while she looks around with raised eyes and gleaming head; it is quite evident that she scorns you, audience!*)

PROLOGUE

Our Actors
Have grown tired
Being people of foreign lands
And ancient times,
Cæsars and Anthonys,
So they have decided
To act You.
Soon,
Two of them
Will appear;
One will be
Dressed in gay clothes:
He is the merry
Part of You,
Yes, You!

The suit
Of the other one
Is black.
He represents the sad
Part of You,
Yes, You!

Our Actors
Have grown tired
Being people of foreign lands
And ancient times,
Cæsars and Anthonys,
And so they have decided
To act You.

(*Having completed her recitation, the Prologue turns gloriously slow and scornful, and is gone, leaving behind her the impression of white marble sheathed in billowing lace.*

When the curtain opens a narrow street is disclosed; to *the rear are shop windows. At first the stage is empty, but just as the audience begins to wonder if someone has misplaced a wig or something, He and His Inner Self, Who Knows Better and Will be Right Presently, enter. One is dressed in the most flashy manner—don't you see the deaf maiden lady in front glaring?—the other in sombre black. We cannot tell which is which, however, for we do not know ourselves. We have a sneaking suspicion that they change their parts around when we are not looking, but we have never caught them at it, and, therefore, cannot be sure. There is some mystic interrelation between them: they seem to follow each other's motions, but as one is the leader one moment, and the other the next, we may gain no hints as to their identity from this.*)

SOMBER FIGURE

I am tired;
The dance is over and the song forgotten;
I am alone, and tired.

GAY FIGURE

I remember trivial things
That could just as well be forgotten;
Little things I said with a smile on my face,
And the laughing answers someone made;
Nothing is more important
Than laughter.

SOMBER

We all danced
Till our feet were tired,
And then—
We danced some more.

GAY

I am jubilant;
The dance is over and the song forgotten;
I am alone
And jubilant.

(*Enter two fancily dressed female mannikins. They walk mechanically, as do all the other dolls, and their distorted shadows lie grotesquely on the back-drop. They stop at a show window where hats are displayed, and talk in high-pitched gurgles, moving their hands and nodding their heads as if governed by a machine.*)

GAY

Look at those girls!
Aren't they lovely?

SOMBER

(*Bitterly*) You know they're not!

They're just tawdry and vulgar!

GAY

You're right as far as you go
But you don't go far enough.
Don't you know
That in hiding their poor complexions
Beneath a mass of stuff
That makes things worse,
They are following a dream?
Beneath their powder and paint
They see themselves resolute
And still young,
Filled with a fire their bodies have lost
But that still remains in their minds.

SOMBER

They're just disgusting!

GAY

No! They are fine.
They are trying to make themselves
Into something better
Than they are.
And since they think they have succeeded,
They have.

SOMBER

Look at them,
And then repeat
That they have succeeded!
See the shop-worn look beneath their mouths
And the weary slope of their eyelids.
Listen to their laughs
Coming up small,
Sounding eerie as they breast the great silence
And then slinking away scared.

GAY

There you are again,
Looking at realities!
Why was I tied to you?

SOMBER

Not through any wish of mine.

GAY

I think it must be some joker
That made the world,
Always constructing a person
Of two opposites;
Like us,
For instance.

SOMBER

Yes,
He never wants people
To be really happy,
So he puts two opposites together
Like you and me.

GAY

He didn't want men
Ever to be satisfied!
I could be happy
Without you!

SOMBER

And I
Without you!

(*There is no bitterness in their talk, just resigned discouragement; this is not the first time they have been over the subject. The Mannikins start to go.*)

SOMBER

Look,
There they go now,
The poor fools who trust in illusion.

GAY

There you are again,
Always nagging me
With your realities.
Listen!

SOMBER

I have listened before.

GAY

Nothing is worthwhile
Except illusion,
And whatever the facts may be,
It doesn't change the dreams.
Dreams are separate from facts—
And stronger.

SOMBER

You have told me all this
Before.

GAY

The world would not be worth living
Without illusion!

(*Somber shakes his head.*)

GAY

The world would not be worth living
Without illusion!
(*Somber is silent.*)

GAY

The world would not be worth living
Without illusion.

SOMBER

Repeating it over
Doesn't make it
Any more true.

GAY

I'm not speaking of the truth,
And—
Why can't you stop nagging me?

SOMBER

You can't build a screen of illusion
That is tough enough
To resist the facts;
All screens are permeable.
You live on illusion now,
And it is a good friend,
But when you are old
It will leave you.
So,
In the end,

You will be left
With nothing.

GAY

It's a lie!

SOMBER

You know it isn't!

GAY

Shut up!

(*Two other mannikins enter shyly. They are a boy and a girl and evidently lovers. She hangs on his arm, and he struts along, proud of the way his strength contrasts with her pretended weakness.*)

GAY

Look at those two, now;
That's a fine sight;
They are real friends.

SOMBER

No,
They're not.
You know as well as I
That if they were not
Man and maid
They would not get on together.

GAY

And why?

SOMBER

They are both so self-centered.
But,
As they are lovers
Each one's ego
Seems courageous pride,
So——

GAY

(*Interrupting*) If it seems
Courageous pride,
It *is*
Courageous pride!

SOMBER

(*Disregarding Gay's comment*)
She is so stupid
That they could not get on
If her silliness did not cater
To his high opinion
Of himself.
(*There is a short pause.*)

SOMBER

That's love for you!
The mixing of uncongenial people
Through the agency of ego.

GAY

You're lying now!

SOMBER

I'm not!

GAY

You know you are!

SOMBER

Shut up!

(*During the above colloquy the two lovers have been standing in a corner of the stage and talking earnestly, with that* *fierce seriousness that only youth possesses. At this moment, however, a male mannikin enters, and, on seeing the lovers, he bursts out laughing, slapping his knees. They redden and rush out the same way they came, followed by the mocking man.*)

GAY

There they go,
That beautiful pair,
Searching for beauty as we all do,
And being baffled,
Like the rest of us,
By drab details and vulgar laughter.

SOMBER

They are vulgar!

GAY

(*Disregarding Somber's remark*)
They are striving to disregard
A group of laughing mockers
Who are envious of them.
They are striving to be themselves,
And find the beauty that is in themselves,
But they will be defeated.
They will,
None the less,
Think they have won;
For,
Little by little,
As the years mass,
Their ideals will be lowered
Till finally they can come up to them.

(*A pause. Then Gay gives an unnatural laugh.*)

But if they think they have won
To that first bright ideal of youth,
They *have!*

(*Pause. Then Somber speaks calmly. His tone is like that of a Mother, telling her child its fears are merely grotesques of its own imagining, and yet foreseeing the World's greater, more dreadful grotesques that the child will soon have to face alone.*)

SOMBER

Why do you keep deluding yourself?
You know that those lovers will never quite wholeheartedly believe
They have fulfilled that first bright yearning.

GAY

(*Pause. Then with an effort.*)
They will!

SOMBER

(*After a pause.*)
Why do you keep deluding yourself?
You with your gay clothes,
And I with my fixed scowl
Are just the same,
Only you tell yourself little lies.

GAY

It isn't true!

SOMBER

You are the better actor;
That is the only difference.
That gaudy cloak of yours
Is just a material covering;
Below it your heart is as heavy as mine.
You would make yourself blind
But, none the less, you see!

GAY

It isn't true!

SOMBER

You know it is.

GAY

Oh, shut up!

(*At this point the lights flash out and the theater is, for a moment, engulfed in heavy darkness. Then, after a brief pause, the lights spring on again, disclosing a drawn curtain; simultaneously a jazz band starts one of those carousing modern tunes which glosses care. It continues till the theater is empty.*)

J. F., Grade XII.

THE END

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